ZERO

Zero Day Threat: A new book explains how Microsoft's Trustworthy Computing initiative missed the boat on cybercrime. PAGE 28

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Criminal Negligence

Nearly seven years after 9/11, information-sharing problems that hobble law enforcement are just beginning to be solved.

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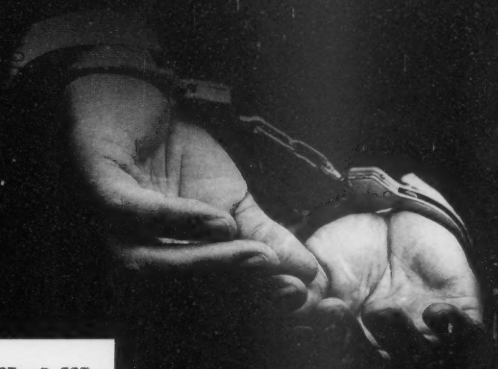

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MAY 26, 2008
VOL. 42, NO. 22 $5/COPY

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Security

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Careers

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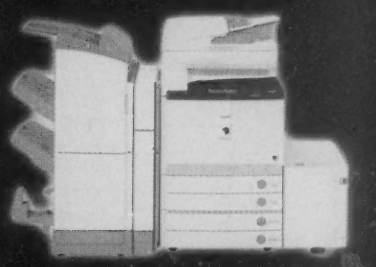
IN THE WORLD OF ENTERPRISE INTEGRATION

I need a solution that runs like clockwork or I run the risk of running a lot of stairs.



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Canon

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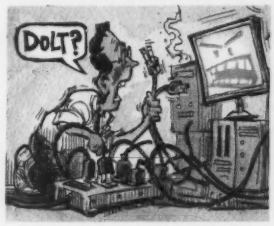

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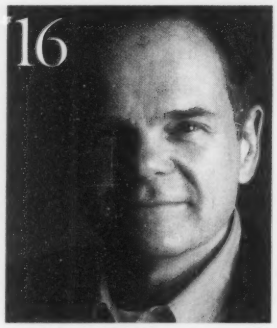

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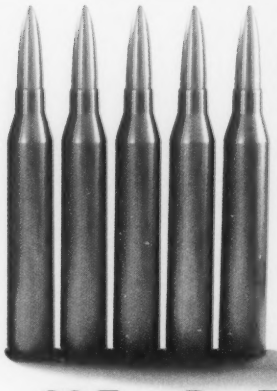

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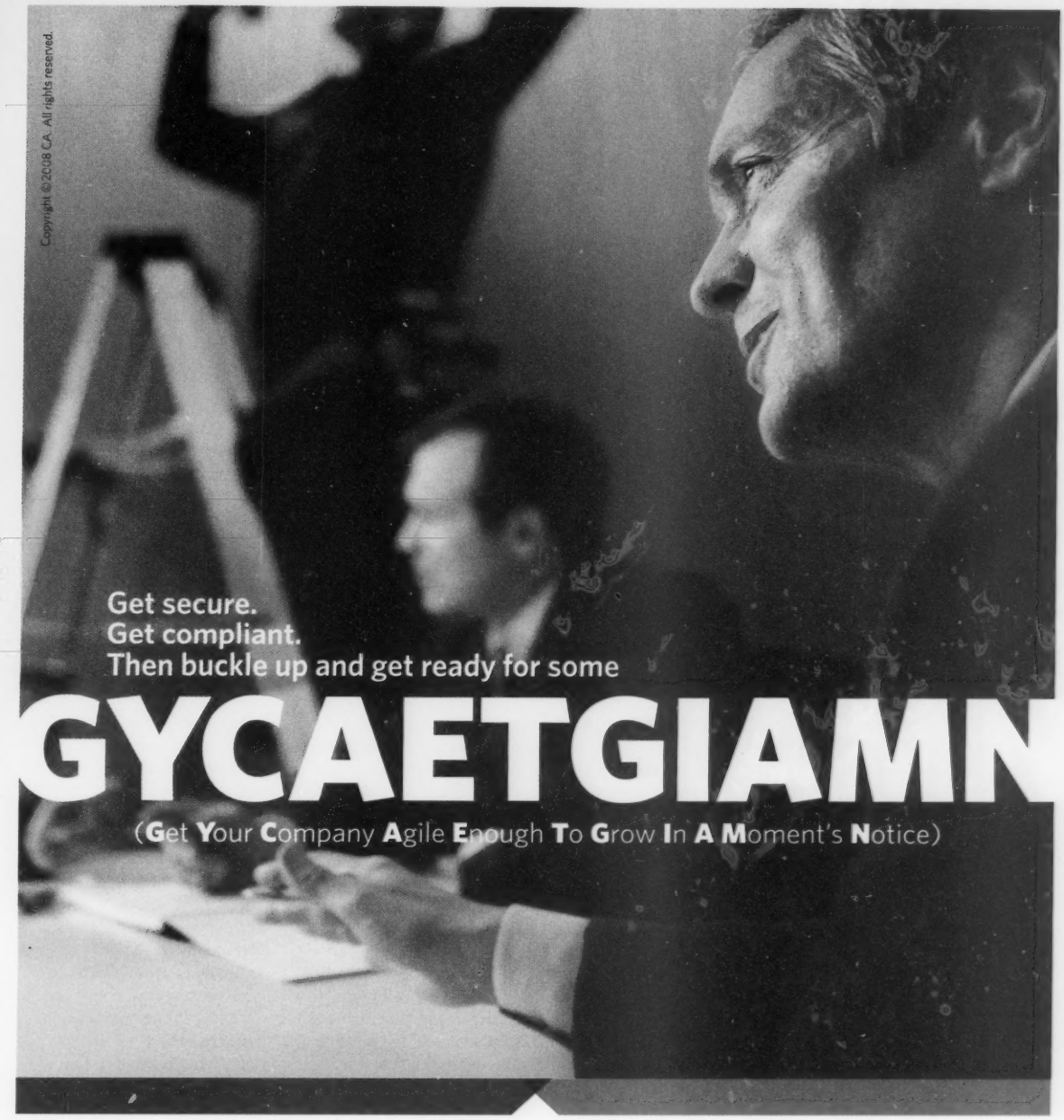
COVER ILLUSTRATION BY ANASTASIA VASILAKIS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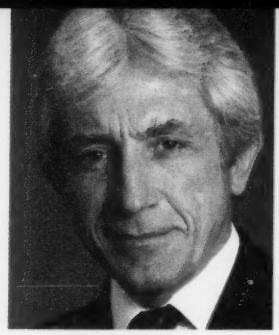
■ EDITOR'S NOTE

Don Tennant

Strengths and Weaknesses



THERE'S A fine line between commitment and focus on one hand, and obstinance and myopia on the other. Or perhaps there's no line at all. Maybe they only differ when the context differs.

That's the lesson I took from the 16th World Congress on Information Technology in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where I moderated a couple of CIO panel discussions. Those discussions were phenomenal, as was the entire program of the three-day congress. But the lesson I took away didn't come from the proceedings. It came from a discussion I had over breakfast one morning with Robert Madge.

Chances are that name rings a bell, if a very distant one. Madge founded Madge Networks, a highflying networking company in the late '80s and better part of the '90s that built its fortunes on the strength of the Token Ring networking protocol championed by IBM. In an interview I conducted with Madge in 1994, he predicted that his company would overtake IBM as the Token Ring market leader within three years. He was right.

The only problem was that Madge's accomplishment was akin to overtaking Sony to become the Betamax market leader in 1985. Because of its high cost and complexity compared with Ethernet, Token Ring was on a downward slide and would never recover.

Madge left the company in 2001, and in 2003 Madge Networks filed for bankruptcy protection. It was subsequently restructured as Madge Inc., and in 2006 it was acquired by Network Technology in the U.K. and merged into that company's Ringdale arm. Robert Madge went on to take an interest in RFID and other tracking technologies, and he now serves as president of IDtrack in Barcelona.

Over breakfast that morning, Madge recounted a fascinating tale of the rise and fall of his namesake company. Its rise came on the strength of a singular focus on Token Ring technology, and a commitment to principle that was epitomized by his refusal to pay patent royalties to Olof Soderblom, the IBM scientist who pioneered Token Ring. Madge insisted that Soderblom's patent didn't cover what his company and others, including IBM and NCR, were doing with Token Ring.

■ Madge's accomplishment was akin to overtaking Sony to become the Betamax market leader in 1985.

It was a costly battle, and Madge's U.S. sales dried up for nine months. But he eventually prevailed in court, and, according to Madge, the other companies were able to stop paying the royalties.

"That gave us huge credibility in the business afterwards," Madge said. "We were the moral leader in the sector, which had an impact on all aspects of our business."

Yet it was that same determination to stick to his guns that led to his failure to prevent his company's collapse.

"If you step back and look at it," Madge said, "a logical move for a company whose technology is going into decline but has a customer base, and hasn't been able to find a way to evolve the company, would be to merge with or be sold to another company. In hindsight, it would have been the logical course."

But despite the urging of some members of his management team, it was a course that Madge never pursued.

"To me, the company was very personal," Madge said. "I put my name on it, and I came from a culture where companies were for life. So I'm sure that emotionally, I wasn't in a good position to consider objectively whether it should be sold or not."

The lesson was clear.

"People's weaknesses and strengths are normally the same things. It all depends on the context whether they turn out to be strengths or weaknesses," Madge said. "The reason why I didn't see the writing on the wall when the best thing to do was to sell the company is probably the same reason why I built the company in the first place."

There's more to the story, which is told in the Q&A I've posted in my blog. My assessment is that the story is far more one of strength than one of weakness, if for no other reason than that it took remarkable strength to tell it. ■

Don Tennant *is editorial director of* Computerworld *and* InfoWorld. *Contact him at don_tennant@computerworld.com, and visit his blog at* http://blogs.computerworld.com/tennant.

■ LETTERS

A Timely Column

Paul Glen's column "Facts and Meaning" [May 5] was just what the doctor ordered. I was in the middle of working with department colleagues on creating a vision statement and — wham! — Glen's column really highlighted what we should be looking for. We have since changed what the vision will look and feel like.

■ **Paul Korcuska,** *manufacturing manager, Delta Systems Inc., Streetsboro, Ohio, pkorcuska@deltasystemsinc.com*

The 'Ducks' at the Top

Bart Perkins is right that "ducks," or underperforming employees, have to be dealt with ["The Duck Project," April 21].

However, he seems to imply that ducks are only found among the rank-and-file workers. There are actually far more ducks in management. And how to get rid of the management ducks? That is a conundrum, since only other managers could do it, and managers tend to protect other managers.

If you think that employee ducks are bad, manager ducks are 10 times worse for the company. And oftentimes, it is manager ducks, not HR, who protect employee ducks. This is especially a problem in the federal government but is rampant in the private sector as well.

If you want to fix the problem, go after the management ducks with a vengeance first. Good companies do exactly that. If you don't take care of the management ducks, nothing else you do will matter.

■ **Avraham Sonenthal,** *consultant, network engineering, British Telecom, Baltimore, avisonenthal@yahoo.com*

Chuckle While You Work

Don Tennant's comments about humor in the workplace are dead-on ["Here's to Humor," April 21]. I just read a book by Adrian Gostick titled *The Levity Effect* that's full of examples of how humor motivates employees. (I'm a little partial because he quoted me a couple of times in the book.) I work in a great environment full of funny and hard-working people and believe humor is one of the best (and most cost-effective) ways to maintain morale and productivity.

■ **Craig Kerkove,** *Dallas*

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Reader Favorites: 10 Great Free Network Tools

Computerworld **recently showcased free network management software, and readers responded with some of their own picks. We take a look at those tools and report on their capabilities and usage.**

Security Goes to The Movies: *Iron Man*

A film geek and a security nerd square off in a cinematic smackdown.

IT Hits the Highway: Big Rigs Go High Tech

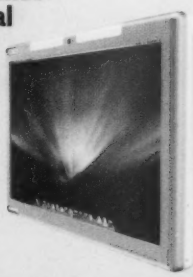
From GPS and handheld computers to enhanced vehicle-monitoring and safety systems, emerging technologies are poised to transform the trucking business.

Hyperconnectivity: Friend or Foe?

OPINION: There's no question that we're all getting hyperconnected, Mike Elgan says, but he wonders whether that's good or bad.

Mac-Based Modbook Tablet Offers Promise But Limited Appeal

REVIEW: Axiotron is now shipping the Modbook, a slate-style tablet computer based on Apple's MacBook laptop that was first unveiled in 2007. While it offers a one-of-a-kind design for Mac users, the sum seems less valuable than the parts.



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News Digest

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THE WEEK AHEAD

WEDNESDAY: Google begins its inaugural Google I/O conference for Web developers in San Francisco.

THURSDAY: RailsConf 2008 opens in Portland, Ore., with a focus on the Rails framework for Web applications.

SATURDAY: Three computer-science groups and the family of Jim Gray present a tribute to him at the University of California, Berkeley. Gray, a renowned researcher at Microsoft, IBM and other vendors, disappeared last year while sailing.

NETWORKING

Rising Fuel Prices Prime Pump for More Telecommuting, Virtual Meetings

LAS VEGAS

THE TIPPING POINT on gas prices came about a month ago for Bill Lucas, an IT engineer at Milwaukee-based utility We Energies. He stopped using his car for his 35-minute commute and instead started taking a bus, which costs $2.50 each way thanks to a ticket subsidy from the utility. Lucas said he has plenty of fellow riders.

Meanwhile, Jim Bagozzi, associate vice president of business solutions at Canadian Tire Corp., said that the Toronto-based retailer and financial services firm is expanding its support for working remotely. Canadian Tire found that in order to entice some new employees with specialized skills, it had to set them up to work in satellite offices instead of requiring them to commute to headquarters.

Telework is "a fairly new concept for us," Bagozzi said. But he noted that gas prices in Toronto were about $1.25 (Canadian) per liter last week — an amount equal to nearly $5 per gallon in U.S. currency.

Lucas and Bagozzi aren't alone. At Forrester Research Inc.'s IT Forum 2008 conference here last week, a dozen IT managers and staffers said that rapidly escalating fuel prices are prompting their companies to increase telecommuting programs or explore the idea of doing so. Some are also turning to virtual meeting technologies to cut down on travel.

Expanded use of videoconferencing technology from Cisco Systems Inc. has helped The Procter & Gamble Co. reduce its corporate travel spending by 15% over the past year, said Marta Foster, vice president of business solutions for global business services at P&G.

David Trumble, an enterprise architect who works at a Boston-area firm that he asked not be named, said the continuing rise in gas prices will likely limit people's job searches to smaller geographic areas if telecommuting support isn't expanded.

A commute of 40 to 50 miles "really doesn't add up" from a cost standpoint nowadays, Trumble said.

On the other hand, Tom Jackson, an IT manager at a consumer products company that he asked not be identified, said he could work from home every day but does so only two days a week — even though driving to work is costing him $60 weekly for gas.

"It's worth it to me to get out of the house," Jackson said.

— Patrick Thibodeau

FOTOLIA

SOFTWARE

Microsoft Embraces Rival File Formats

MICROSOFT CORP. last week said it will add support for the ODF and PDF file formats to Office 2007 – a change of heart that won it some praise from desktop application rivals such as IBM and OpenOffice.org.

Native support for the Open Document Format for Office Applications and the Portable Document Format will be built into the Service Pack 2 release of Office 2007, which is due in the first half of next year.

Office users currently have to install third-party plug-ins to store documents in ODF. Gray Knowlton, an Office group product manager at Microsoft, said that the software vendor previously had heard from users that supporting plug-in translators was good enough. But now, he added, "we've gotten the direction that people want ODF in the product."

Ironically, the ODF and PDF support will be added before Office 2007 gets full support for the recently ratified ISO-standard version of Microsoft's own Office Open XML format in its next major release.

– ELIZABETH MONTALBANO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

FORMAT CHANGE

USERS WITH OFFICE 2007 SP2 WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Edit and save documents in ODF, and set it as their default file format.
- Save files in PDF or Microsoft's rival XML Paper Specification format.

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DEVELOPMENT

Delays, Cost Overruns Plague Portland IT Project

DELAYS and cost overruns forced the city of Portland, Ore., to replace the consultant it hired to oversee an IT project whose price tag spiraled from $31 million to almost $50 million over 20 months.

The city launched the project in late 2006 with the expectation that by December 2007, new computers and SAP applications would be installed, and 300 key software and hardware systems would be overhauled and integrated.

When it became apparent late last year that the project was facing delays, the city moved to terminate its contract with Ariston Consulting & Technologies Inc., the firm overseeing the effort, said Laurel Butman, a principal management analyst in Portland's Office of Management and Finance.

The city quickly sought help from SAP AG consultants, who blamed the delay on "the process of approaching the implementation," Butman noted.

The SAP consultants extended the project's timeline and now expect the SAP financial software to be running by this November and the vendor's human resource applications by next May.

Robert Stoll, a Portland attorney representing Ariston, said the San Diego-based company set the project's budget and schedule based on information provided by city officials who were not familiar with Portland's IT systems and needs. "It's sort of 'garbage in, garbage out,' if you know what I mean," he said.

> **"It's sort of 'garbage in, garbage out,' if you know what I mean. I certainly don't think that Ariston made any mistakes. The city, rightly or wrongly, lost confidence in Ariston.**
> ROBERT STOLL, ATTORNEY REPRESENTING ARISTON CONSULTING & TECHNOLOGIES INC.

"I certainly don't think that Ariston made any mistakes. The city, rightly or wrongly, lost confidence in Ariston," Stoll added.

Stoll and the city are still working to settle disagreements about payments for change orders. "We hope that we're not going to have to take legal action," the attorney said. "I'm very hopeful that the parties will be able to work things out."

Mark Greinke, who assumed the city's chief technology officer post in February, said Portland officials have been planning the project since 2001.

Once the IT systems are upgraded, most city workers will be able to access the new SAP applications through Web-based interfaces, Greinke said.

The problems with Portland's IT overhaul came at the same time developer MetroFi Inc. halted partially completed work on the city's much-touted Wi-Fi project, after cutting revenue projections.

— *Todd R. Weiss*

Short Takes

Cisco Systems Inc. has issued three security patches that fix denial-of-service bugs discovered in the Secure Shell protocol in Cisco IOS Software, which runs the company's routers, and in its Service Control Engine.

Hewlett-Packard Co. said that a 31% increase in laptop PC sales led to strong financial results for its second quarter, which ended April 30. The company reported a profit of $2.06 billion on revenue of $28.3 billion, up 11% from a year earlier.

Federal courts in California and Connecticut have charged 38 people in the U.S. and Romania with using complex Internet phishing schemes to steal thousands of credit and debit card numbers.

Red Hat Inc. and Novell Inc. have both unveiled updates for their high-end Linux operating systems. Both Red Hat Enterprise Linux 5.2 and Service Pack 2 for Novell's SUSE Linux Enterprise 10 add capabilities and support for new hardware.

HARDWARE

EMC Execs Look to Help Drive Down SSD Prices

LAS VEGAS – EMC Corp. expects that its plan to spread solid-state technology through its high-end disk storage arrays will help cut the price of the technology and make it more attractive to IT executives.

At the EMC World user conference here last week, top executives said they expect solid-state pricing to be comparable to that of high-performance Fibre Channel drives by 2011.

"The price for flash is coming down significantly faster than rotating drives right now," said Dave Donatelli, executive vice president of storage platforms operations at EMC. "Our stated corporate goal is we're trying to drive it down as fast as we can."

EMC began its solid-state push in January by making the technology an option for its high-end Symmetrix storage arrays. The products use solid-state disks made by Stec Inc.

NEW EMC PRODUCTS

- **Disk Library 3D 1500:** Low-end LAN backup-to-disk system
- **Disk Library 3D 3000:** Mid-range LAN backup-to-disk system
- **Disk Library 4000:** Virtual tape library with data de-duplication
- **Avamar 4.0:** Next-generation backup and recovery tool
- **NetWorker Fast Start:** Midrange version of the backup software

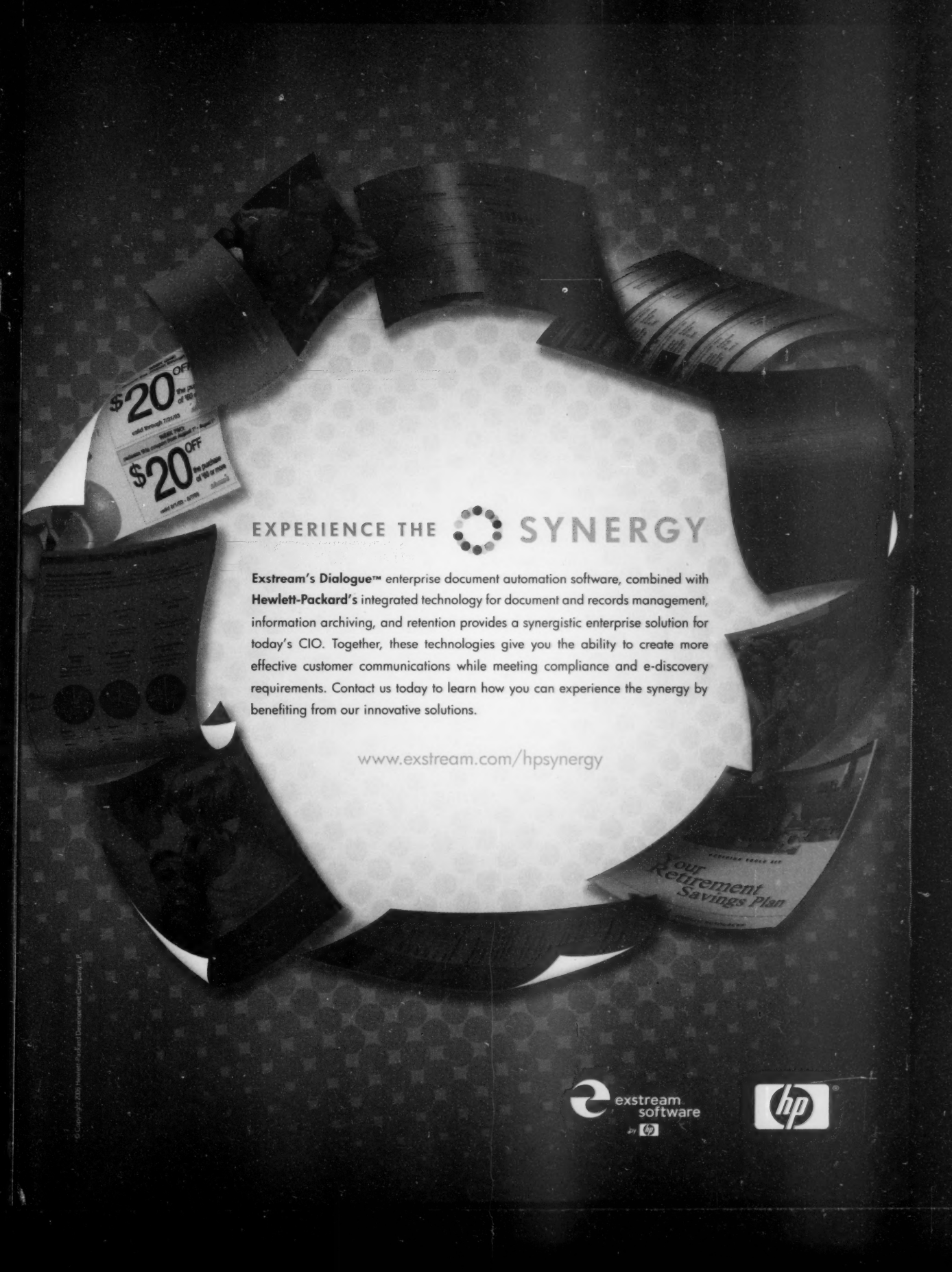
K.J. Burke, a systems engineer at gold mining operation Barrick Gold Corp. in Toronto, said his firm is looking to solid-state technology because the servers and disk drives at its mines are subjected to dust and dirt tracked in by workers.

"What I like about solid-state disk is there are no moving parts to break down," he said.

John Webster, an analyst at Illuminata Inc., suggested that Fibre Channel drives will probably also drop in price and increase in efficiency over the next two to three years.

"I think it's too early to jump the gun on this," Webster said.

– LUCAS MEARIAN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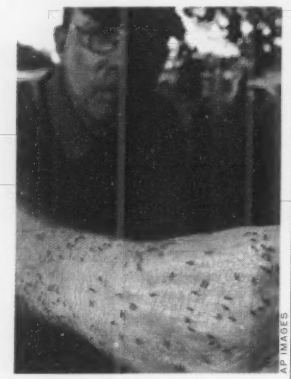
IT vs. MOTHER NATURE

NASA, Others Move to Save IT From Ant Swarms


AP IMAGES

« Texas exterminator Tom Rasberry with his namesake "crazy Rasberry ants."

THE JOHNSON Space Center has called in insect extermination experts to help keep a swarm of voracious ants out of its sensitive and critical computer systems.

The ants have been causing growing problems — from short-circuiting computers to shutting down major corporate IT systems — in their six-year march through five Texas counties in the Gulf Coast area.

"These ants are raising havoc," said Roger Gold, professor of entomology at Texas A&M University. "They're foraging for food, and they'll go into any space looking for it. In the process, they make their way into sensitive equipment."

Just last week, the Texas Department of Agriculture requested federal funding to study the species.

Officials believe the nonnative creatures came ashore several years ago off a ship from a Caribbean country, said Paul Nester, a program specialist at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

The ants are dubbed "crazy Rasberry ants" after Tom Rasberry, owner of Budget Pest Control in Pearland, Texas, who first tackled the species in 2002.

NASA's Johnson Space Center turned to Rasberry about two months ago as the swarm approached Houston. Through last week, he had found four colonies at the NASA site, but so far, all were small enough to control.

"With the computer systems they have, it could devastate the facility," Rasberry said. "If these ants got into the facility in the numbers they have in other locations, well, it would be awful."

NASA referred all questions to Rasberry.

— Sharon Gaudin

BETWEEN THE LINES *By John Klossner*

BENCHMARKS LAST WEEK

The U.S. International Trade Commission rejected Microsoft Corp.'s claims that Alcatel-Lucent had infringed on four unified-communications patents. An administrative law judge had ruled earlier that one of the patents was infringed.

Google Inc. launched its Google Health service, which lets individuals store their medical records and other health data online.

18 YEARS AGO: Microsoft released Windows 3.0, which sold 10 million copies in two years and established Windows as the dominant PC operating system.

Global Dispatches

U.K. Health Center Loses Data Tape

ISLE OF WIGHT, England – A computer backup tape containing personal information on some 38,000 medical patients was lost while being shipped by courier from the Sandown Health Centre here to a London-based software company.

The tape contained medical records of current and former patients dating back almost 12 years. The U.K. National Health Service said the software firm was going to test the software used to run the backup tape.

The local NHS Trust said that the tape is presumed to be lost, "possibly permanently, although all possible efforts are being made to find it." It added that the risk of misuse is "extremely small" because the tape requires proprietary equipment.

Computerworld U.K. staff

Hong Kong Firm, Intel to Build PC

HONG KONG – Alibaba.com Ltd. and Intel Corp. plan to jointly develop a computer designed to help small and midsize Chinese businesses boost online efforts.

The companies said in a statement that the new computer will be based on undisclosed Intel components and will be equipped with Alibaba's e-commerce applications. An Intel spokesman did say that the new PCs will not run the company's Atom processor, which is due to ship in June.

Hong Kong-based Alibaba's e-commerce site matches foreign buyers with Chinese exporters. Yahoo Inc. holds a 40% stake in the firm.

The spokesman said the jointly built PCs will be available this year from an as-yet undetermined manufacturer. Pricing has not been set.

Channelworld India staff

BRIEFLY NOTED

The U.K. government last week approved a plan proposed by the Metropolitan Police Service to create national e-crime law enforcement unit. The £5.3 million ($10.5 million U.S.) proposal calls for training 50 officers to investigate online crimes ranging from fee fraud to terrorist threats.

Leo King,
Computerworld U.K.

IT Security Report Card Gets Low Grade From Critics

Federal agencies scored a C overall on an annual report card that's based on their FISMA compliance reports. But is it all just a paperwork exercise? By Jaikumar Vijayan

THE U.S. government received an overall C grade on an annual information-security report card that was released last week. But there is growing skepticism about whether the report card and the internal security reports on which it's based accurately portray how well prepared federal agencies are to deal with IT security threats.

Nine of the 24 agencies rated by Rep. Tom Davis (R-Va.) were given failing security grades for 2007 on the new report card, while eight got grades of A- or better.

The grades are based on reports of agencies' compliance with the Federal Information Security Management Act. Those reports are compiled annually by the inspector general at each agency.

Approved by Congress in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, FISMA was initially seen as a much-needed measure for bolstering IT security within the government. But now critics claim that many agencies are treating the FISMA process as little more than a paperwork exercise, not as a means of implementing actual security improvements.

"FISMA reports say absolutely nothing about government security," said Alan Paller, director of research at the SANS Institute, an IT training and certification organization in Bethesda, Md. "This is just a measure of compliance with report-generation [requirements]."

The big problem, according to Paller and other critics, is that FISMA doesn't require agencies to demonstrate that they have effectively implemented the mandated controls. For instance, an agency that can show it has a security awareness training program is deemed to be compliant with that requirement, even if no employees have received any training.

Ironically, Paller said, some agencies that are trying to comply with the intent of FISMA are getting poor grades on Davis' report card, while others that seem to view it merely as a report-writing process are receiving higher grades.

FISMA "is an example for the textbooks," Paller said, contending that the reports produce "useless scores" that are highlighted by Congress in a way that encourages agencies "to deliver misleading results."

Karen Evans, who is the de facto federal CIO through her role as administrator of e-government and IT at the White House Office of Management and Budget, acknowledged that federal officials want to make the FISMA reports more results-oriented.

"OMB and [Congress] share the goal of moving our scorecards beyond a compliance exercise," Evans wrote in an e-mail. She added that officials are looking at using unspecified "additional factors" to more accurately measure how agencies are doing on security.

Gartner Inc. analyst John Pescatore said that FISMA has succeeded at focusing attention on cybersecurity issues throughout the federal government. "At least it's forcing agencies to publicly state how well they're doing with security," he noted. "Where are the grades for private industry?"

But Pescatore added that the FISMA process has become too "paper-bound" and is in need of a "major revamp." For example, he said he would like to see requirements for continuous vulnerability assessments, such as those mandated by the major credit card companies as part of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard.

The overall C grade handed out by Davis, who is the ranking minority member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, was a slight improvement over the C- that the government got on last year's report card.

A staff member in Davis' office, which asked that the employee not be identified, said the congressman is working to "improve the efficacy of the scores and to make sure the [FISMA] process is measuring what it's supposed to be measuring."

According to the staffer, Davis is drafting legislation that would give FISMA more teeth. The goal, he said, is to give agencies incentives for using FISMA to improve their security while instituting "firm penalties" for those that fail to do so. ■

MAKING (AND NOT MAKING) THE GRADE

A+
- Agency for International Development
- Department of Justice
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Science Foundation

A
- Housing and Urban Development
- Social Security Administration

A-
- General Services Administration
- Office of Personnel Management

F
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Labor
- Department of Transportation
- Department of the Treasury
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission

IT Finally Opens Its Eyes to Camera Phones

FOTOLIA

As handheld devices with built-in cameras become more and more prevalent, IT departments are finding it harder to keep them out of the hands of end users.

By Matt Hamblen

CAMERAS ARE now available on nearly all wireless handhelds, from inexpensive cell phones to high-end smart phones and PDAs. While that's convenient for end users who want to use their phones to take pictures, it's putting pressure on IT managers to reconsider corporate policies banning camera-equipped devices.

Beginning in 2004, when handhelds with built-in cameras first became widely available, many companies, worried about the potential security and privacy threats posed by the devices, dug in their heels and insisted that their workers continue to use models without cameras.

Four years later, though, that hard-line approach appears to be softening. "Some companies are still avoiding [handhelds with cameras], but that's a minority," said Gartner Inc. analyst Ken Dulaney, who works with many Fortune 500 companies on their mobile device purchases and policies.

Jack Gold, an analyst at J.Gold Associates LLC, said his clients are also relaxing their rules. "Most are resigned to the notion that virtually all phones include cameras," Gold said.

That's the case at a large U.S. corporation with about 30,000 BlackBerry users. The company recently lifted its outright ban on cameras for new device purchases.

"Even the low-end phones are coming out with Bluetooth and cameras," said a senior IT manager at the company who asked not to be identified. But even though the ban was lifted, that doesn't mean it's open season on camera use: The IT manager said that whenever tech staffers can use management tools to remotely disable built-in cameras, they are doing so.

There are multiple tools that can be used to curtail internal camera use. For example, BlackBerry maker Research In Motion Ltd. offers models in which cameras can be turned off via its BlackBerry Enterprise Server software, to prevent employees from surreptitiously photographing proprietary information or taking other inappropriate photos. Microsoft Corp. has made similar photo-blocking capabilities available for devices running Windows Mobile, via its Exchange ActiveSync synchronization technology.

In addition, some handhelds are still being configured and sold without cameras in order to satisfy the demands of business buyers with strict no-camera policies. For example, Verizon Wireless continues to stock camera-free devices, such as the BlackBerry 8830, among its inventory of about 30 mobile devices from various hardware makers.

"Some companies don't see the camera as an issue, but some still prefer that employees not have them," a Verizon Wireless spokes-

Continued on page 14

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Continued from page 12

woman said. She noted that companies in certain industries, as well as many government agencies, have retained tough policies on devices with cameras.

Gold, who advises companies on wireless technologies, used to tell his clients to buy phones without cameras to avoid security issues.

"However, the truth is, most phones today have cameras built in," he said. "And if you search for a good-featured phone, you likely will not be able to find one without the camera." Now Gold counsels companies to educate their users about the security risks of cell phone cameras and to consider remotely disabling the cameras instead of banning them.

One of the reasons why no-camera policies were adopted was to prevent rogue workers from taking photos of computer screens or of new products being developed and then using the photos to compromise their employers' data security.

Security guards sometimes confiscate the phones of visitors if they suspect the devices have cameras built into them, or they take the lesser step of putting tape over the cameras' lenses. But a lens can be the size of a pinhole and can be easily hidden, making it extremely hard to detect cameras in some cases. Even confirming that a phone's camera is turned off can be difficult because doing so requires close examination of the device's user interface.

Dulaney first wrote about camera phones as a security threat in early 2004, after vendors flooded that year's Consumer Electronics Show with announcements of the devices. But he said then that camera bans were "an overreaction" by companies and IT departments, and his opinion hasn't changed over the past four years.

ISTOCKPHOTO

TIPS: Setting Camera Phone Policies

- **Establish a clear usage policy, not an outright ban.**
- **Create clearly marked "secure zones" where photography is forbidden.**
- **Ban photography of items that are confidential to your company.**
- **Prohibit anyone from taking pictures of other people without their permission.**
- **Insist that no photos be taken in places where personal privacy is expected.**

SOURCE: GARTNER INC.

Blanket bans on cameras are "a stupid position," said Dulaney. "If you're a spy, you won't have a camera that people can see." He added that having a camera on a handheld device can actually be valuable for employees in some situations — even for surreptitiously photographing crimes being committed in company parking lots to help police catch the perpetrators.

Many companies deploy cell phones with cameras for business purposes. For example, repairmen use them to take photos of defective parts, and real estate agents can quickly snap photos of houses being put up for sale. But Gene Gretzer, an information management project manager at St. Luke's Episcopal Health System in Houston, said he still finds the quality of camera phone pictures to be too grainy for any serious business uses, other than as publicity photos on hospital Web sites.

Dulaney recommended that companies set up so-called secure zones where restrictions on camera phones are tighter than they are elsewhere. That might mean, say, that a business would show off new products only in a secure zone and would confiscate phones with cameras before visitors or even employees entered that area.

"Usage guidelines are far more effective than outright bans," Dulaney said.

At St. Luke's, the focus has been on developing policies against taking photographs instead of preventing users from obtaining camera phones. "It's pretty hard to draft and maintain a policy on [buying] technology when it changes so often and when everyone has a phone of a different type and uses it for other things, like talking," Gretzer said.

But regulating use of the devices can be difficult as well, he added. St. Luke's restricts cell phone usage in certain areas within its medical facilities for safety reasons related to electromagnetic emissions, but not throughout every building. Outside of those areas, the IT department relies on workers to alert it if they see someone actively using a camera phone to take photos under questionable circumstances.

The Los Angeles Community College District also hasn't banned camera phones, although there are plenty of locations where data security is paramount, said CIO Jorge Mata. For example, student payment records are openly displayed on computer monitors in the finance offices of the LACCD, which has nine campuses and more than 130,000 students.

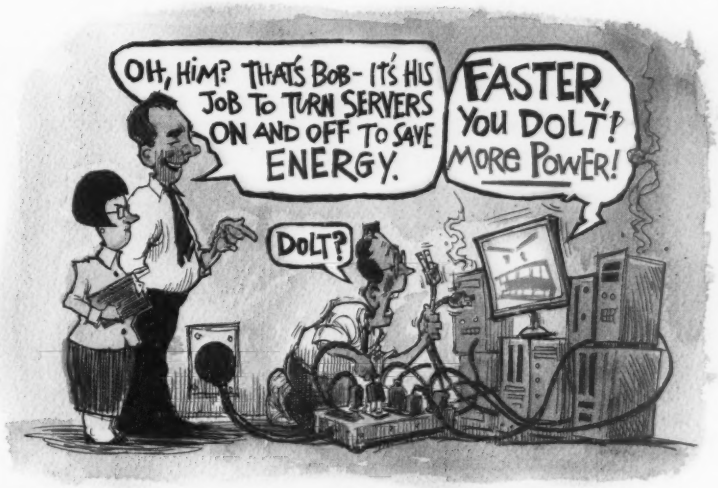
To limit the risk that an unauthorized person might pass by a terminal and use a camera phone to photograph sensitive information, the LACCD has installed "hundreds" of privacy filters on laptop and desktop PC screens, Mata said. The filters, which range in price from $45 to $200 each, are designed to prevent anyone but the user sitting in front of the screen from seeing the information.

"We don't want to risk privacy," Mata said. But he added that in general, setting usage guidelines for camera-equipped phones and then relying on the common sense of users makes more sense to him than slapping a ban on the devices does. "Some things," he said, "do not come down to a technology solution." ■

> **"Most phones today have cameras built in, and if you search for a good-featured phone, you likely will not be able to find one without the camera."**
>
> **JACK GOLD,** ANALYST, J.GOLD ASSOCIATES LLC

On the Mark

HOT TRENDS ■ NEW PRODUCT NEWS ■ INDUSTRY BUZZ BY MARK HALL



MATTHEW FAULKNER

Idle Servers Eat Energy

CASSATT CORP. is betting that soaring energy costs and increased green awareness in IT will make a new feature in Cassatt Active Response data center management software appealing. With the release of Version 5.1 last week, users of the San Jose-based company's tool will be able to set policies to turn servers off when the software detects that they are idle.

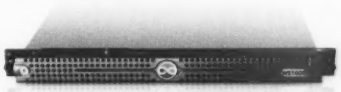
Jay Fry, vice president of marketing, says the policies are broad enough to accommodate virtually anyone's definition of *idle*. And he doesn't think data center managers should be reluctant to turn servers off. "It's an urban myth that it's a bad thing," he contends.

$98k
Annual savings in energy costs for 1,000 servers shut off 25% of the time, claims Cassatt.

Ken Oestreich, director of product management, adds that it's not enough for IT managers to buy power-efficient servers or rely solely on server consolidation to achieve green goals. "Just because you buy energy-efficient light bulbs doesn't mean you forget about light switches," he says. Cassatt Active Response 5.1 works with various types of management software, such as load balancers and trouble-ticket systems, so that false alerts aren't generated. The upgrade also supports more server systems' power controllers, including Sun's. Pricing starts at $200 per managed machine.

Dance, Apps, Dance!

If Web services-based applications dance, it's a slow waltz, since choreographing the work among various dependent services can bog down systems. But this August, Strangeloop Networks Inc. in Vancouver, British Columbia, will release the WS1000 Web Services Accelerator appliance to help your apps pick up the tempo. According to Virginia Balcom, vice president of marketing, the device uses the company's "choreography engine" to cache data from the various services, thereby offloading requests from the primary systems. Because the appliance is tuned for things such as SOAP calls, it can anticipate impending data requests and prefetch them to the cache, further speeding the application.



Strangeloop's WS1000 boosts Web services' performance.

Joshua Bixby, senior vice president of products and sales, says the WS1000 watches how a Web services app works and optimizes its performance based on what it learns.

The WS1000 will start at $30,000.

Too Many Orphans in IT

Symark International Inc., which does business as Symark Software in Agoura Hills, Calif., funded a survey of managers in IT, HR, security and other areas to learn just how pervasive the problem of orphaned accounts is.

Very pervasive, it seems.

In the survey, conducted by Oak Brook, Ill.-based eMediaUSA and released last week, 27% of the 850-plus respondents admitted that they had more than 20 active orphaned accounts, or accounts that weren't closed after a worker or contractor was terminated. Eight percent acknowledged that they had live accounts for 100 or more ex-workers. More incredibly, 15% said those accounts had been accessed at least once since the person had left.

9%
Percentage of eMediaUSA survey respondents who said they have 50 to 99 orphaned accounts on their networks.

Scarier still, 42% are clueless. That is, they don't know how many orphaned accounts exist or whether orphaned accounts are still being used.

Among the relatively few respondents who said all accounts are closed upon an individual's termination, an amazing 12% said it took a month or longer to do so.

Ellen Libenson, vice president of marketing, says orphaned accounts don't get the attention they deserve. "Everybody knows it, but people are overextended," she explains. ■

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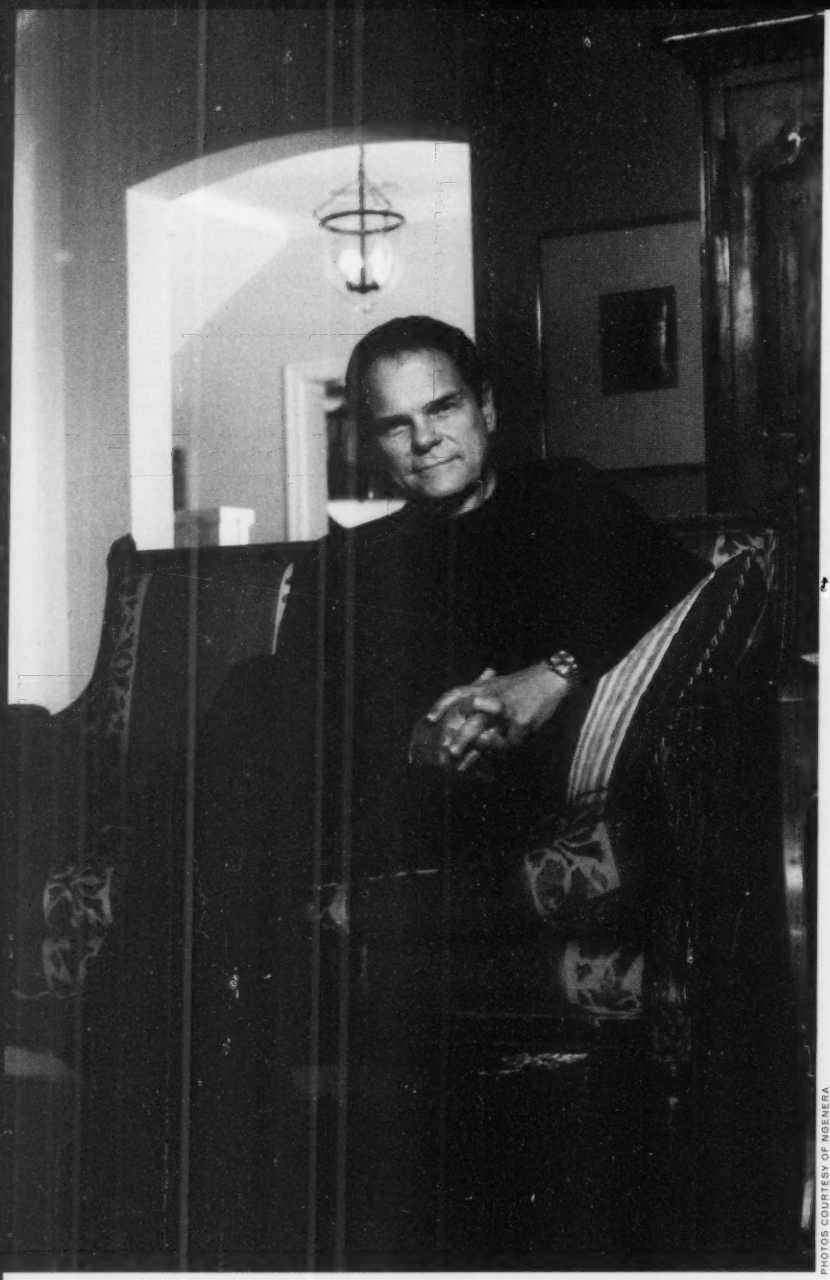

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NGENERA

Dossier

Name: Don Tapscott

Title: Chairman

Organization: nGenera Innovation Network

Location: Toronto

Most interesting thing people don't know about you: "My Grade 3 teacher told my mother I'd never graduate from high school."

Favorite technology: His 1934 Hammond B3 organ

In high school . . . "I had my father as a French teacher. Best teacher ever."

Favorite nonwork pastime: "My band, Men in Suits. (Everyone in the band is an investment banker except me.) On a good day, my 24-year-old daughter, Niki, sings lead. But we can't always get her, as she has a life."

Role model: Nelson Mandela

Social passion: Combatting the stigma of mental illness

Write your own epitaph: "He endeavored to live a life of integrity."

■ THE GRILL

Don Tapscott

The ***Wikinomics*** author talks about **enabling mass collaboration**, **building trust** and understanding **why Web sites are out** and **communities are in.**

In 2006, author and technology think-tank head Don Tapscott teamed up with Anthony D. Williams to write Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything *(Penguin Group), a hugely successful book about the Web 2.0 economy. Now Williams and Tapscott, a former* Computerworld *columnist, have written two new chapters that offer business executives tips on how to embark upon mass collaboration efforts; the additions are included in a new version of the book that was released last month.*

In the book, you note how Goldcorp used an open-source-type model to invite geologists and others to help it identify possible locations to mine for gold. What are the common roadblocks that prevent other organizations from embarking on similar initiatives? The big one is that we fear what we don't know and understand. For any senior executive to de-

Continued on page 18

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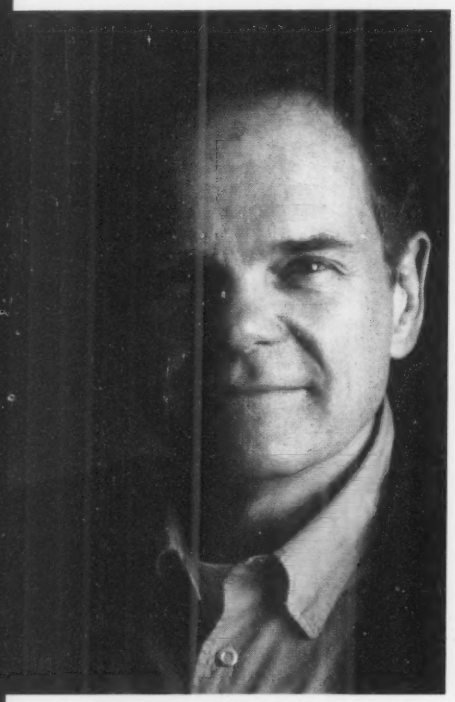

"If you approach it as protecting your IP from the beginning, you'll end up like the record industry and have your business obliterated.

Continued from page 16

cide to move forward on this, personal use is a precondition. So unless a senior executive decided to edit a Wikipedia page, or has spent time on Facebook with their kid, or has tagged a photo on Flickr, they have no idea why this new Web is different than the Web of the dot-com era. People still think the Internet is about Web sites and stickiness and clicks and page views. But that was the old Internet of 12 years ago.

The other thing is that many people mistakenly believe this is about social networking and hooking up online, or creating a gardening community, or putting a video on YouTube. But all of that is so 2006. This is a new mode of production. There's a profound change in the ways that we orchestrate capabilities to create goods and services and to innovate. I don't think it's hyperbolic to say it's the biggest change in a century to the corporation.

[But] the principles of wikinomics are kind of counterintuitive. This guy at Goldcorp: The conventional wisdom is to work inside your boundaries. What he *should've* done is fired his head of geology and gotten better talent. But he didn't do that — he wondered who his peers are. And the best submissions [of potential mining sites] didn't come from geologists but from mathematicians and consultants and military officers.

And he gave away his intellectual property. That's unheard of. Why would you do that? Well, the market value of [Goldcorp] went from $90 million to $10 billion, and a lot of it came down to trust.

We have a culture of control rather than a culture of enablement in our companies. We seek to manage risk by being opaque and by trying to have tight controls. [But] look at the economy: It's in the tank. All these principles go against the grain; they don't feel right to most of these executives. But $9 million worth of research tells me these are the axes that successful 21st-century companies will be built with.

So, how can corporate executives work through the issues that you just cited? You've got 80 million young people coming into the workforce, and they, as high school and university students, have at their fingertips more-powerful communications tools than exist in corporate America. They're itching to go. Why not stick your saddle on that horse instead of pounding your head against the wall with someone who thinks that Facebook should be banned by a company? It's bizarre — companies are doing the exact opposite of what they should be doing. It's reminiscent of companies banning IM five years ago.

How is mass collaboration playing out in the pharmaceutical industry, where competition is so fierce? There's a lot of cognitive dissonance among pharmaceutical executives. In the biotechnology industry, there's the Human Genome Project, where everyone is placing [intellectual property] in the commons so that a rising tide will lift all boats. But in pharma, they have this huge struggle with IP, with generic drugs and knockoffs. The industry, by outsourcing drug trials, is moving forward with sharing IP. But they haven't taken the next step for mass collaboration. If you reach Stage IV in a drug trial, what a great opportunity to use the Web to see what's going on.

Deep down, I can't believe that executives would be so thoughtless and cynical about sharing information. Why not have a different model so that instead of doing all this R&D yourselves and producing a drug and using broadcast media to push it out into the market, you apply collaboration throughout the entire process? You can share IP with your competitors, and ultimately you tap into "ideagoras" [i.e., a marketplace of ideas]. It's a great example of an industry that can reinvent itself using this model.

To embrace the notion of mass collaboration, what steps do companies need to take to protect their own intellectual property? The starting point shouldn't be, "How do we protect our IP?" The starting point should be, "How do we innovate?" IBM doesn't expect to own its primary operating system, which now is Linux. Every one of us has a mutual fund that includes a portfolio of stocks: high-tech, U.S., Asian, etc. Every company needs a portfolio of intellectual property — some that it protects, some that it shares within its business Web and some that it places in the commons, like the biotech companies did around the Human Genome Project.

If you approach it as protecting your IP from the beginning, you'll end up like the record industry and have your business obliterated. The industry that brought you Elvis and the Beatles is now suing its customers and collapsing.

— *Interview by* **Thomas Hoffman**

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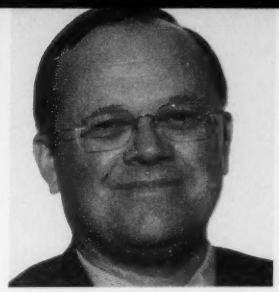
■ OPINION

Bruce A. Stewart



Taking Control By Letting Go

I KNOW OF a central IT group that recently grew eightfold overnight. No, not through a merger — it was the users turning their shadow IT groups over to IT because they don't need them anymore. All of this happened because this central IT organization got into the business of creating tools for users to satisfy reasonable IT needs on their own.

Most of the IT groups I see operate in command-and-control mode, born out of the needs for security and compliance. And these needs certainly exist! Couple them with tight budgets, however, and central IT starts to be seen as the choke point, the place where you can't get things done — or at least not quickly.

That inevitably leads to the creation of shadow IT groups and a slew of users buying applications (typically as software as a service) and rolling their own apps in spreadsheets that ought to have more rigor and controls than they do. In other words, every time a door is closed, a way to get around it opens up.

IT organizations that open doors and find ways to serve their users quickly — even to the point of turning over certain types of development frameworks to them — aren't giving up. Rather, they're being businesslike and making themselves the vendors of choice.

At one of my clients, the basic materials being provided take the form of organized data, implemented around IT's desired (but not yet achieved) information architecture, and tools to get at it, such as business intelligence apps, precoded queries, and Excel or Access "receptors" for data extracts.

IT provides portal software and wikis to build Web-based applications, and it has added widgets and other tools for mashups. It offers advice in blog posts, how-to forums and podcasts that are really short education sessions. This makes it easy to get small things done: no formal project required, and no nonsense about funding. IT has also set up its own portal structure, making it easy to get a new cell phone, borrow equipment for travel (including iPods for podcasts on long flights) or book professional time with an IT expert.

■ When you make it easy to do business with you, you get business.

When you make it easy to do business with you, you get business. At this company, hundreds of business-side business analysts were doing IT work, though they were in jobs that had no clear route either back to the business or deeper into technical work. With IT's change in approach, they suddenly had competition. The business areas got out of the IT business, since they could get small things done fast without IT, while the rest could go through proper channels. The business side kept the most talented analysts and turned the others over to central IT, where they could grow.

The CIO also moved to a governing board structure, to get input from business leaders on prioritization and direction.

A lot of IT still gets built out in the user areas, but it now has support. The central group offers a service to audit spreadsheets and Access databases for integrity: Users can face corporate compliance and audit on their own or have their systems checked out and approved by IT. Almost no one goes it alone — and the security, integrity and compliance needs are met cooperatively.

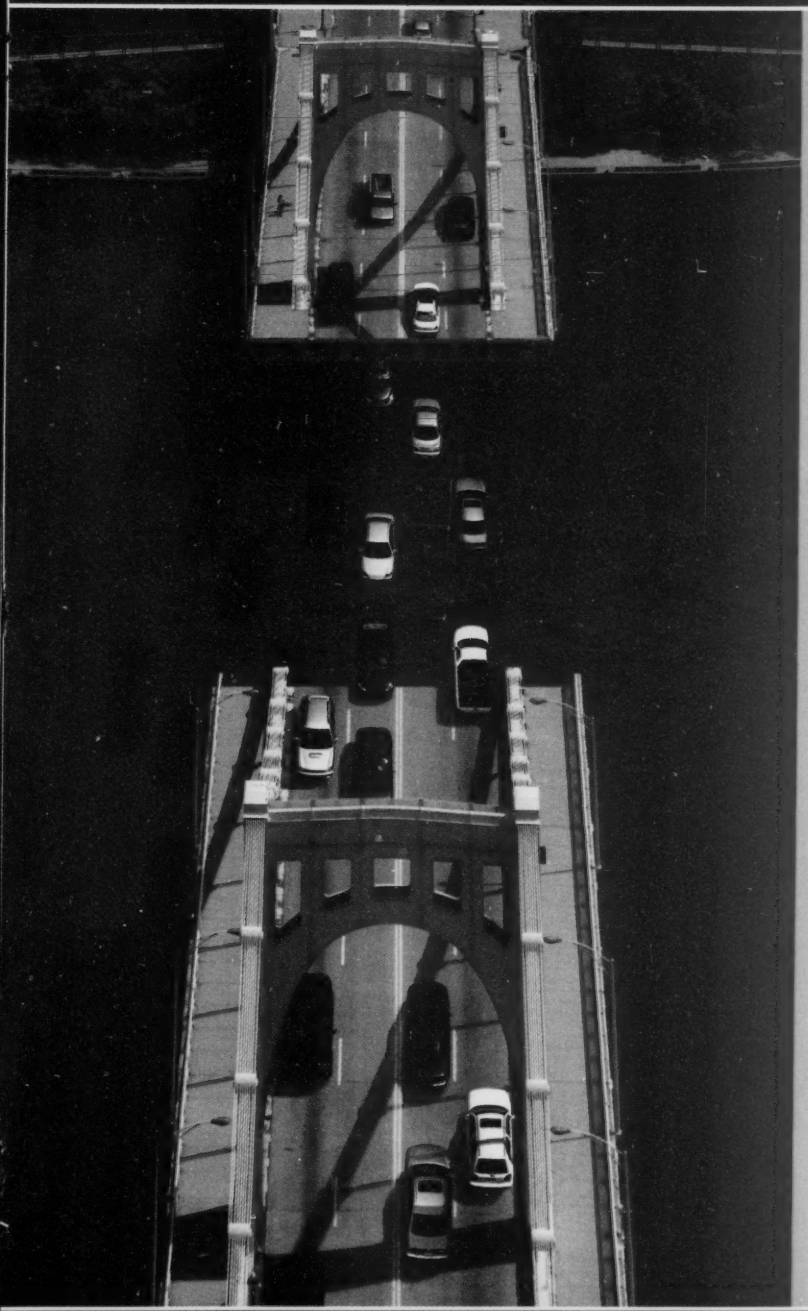
Meanwhile, IT offers a lot more advice upfront, long before minds get set. Vendors, too, are realizing that the road to a sale runs through IT, not the business. All in all, a lot more gets done, and a lot less trouble emerges.

The CIO funded this shift totally from the base IT budget — it has cost all of 2%, or basically the innovation budget for a year.

In a time of constraints, opening up in this way relieves the pressure created by projects that aren't able to get approval anyway. Give "supplier of choice" a try; you might be surprised at how enthusiastically users respond. ■

Bruce A. Stewart *is CEO of Vancouver, British Columbia-based Accendor Research Inc., an advisory services firm focused on management issues in the technology-enabled enterprise. He can be reached at bruce.stewart@accendor.com.*

WHEN INFORMATION AVAILABILITY MATTERS



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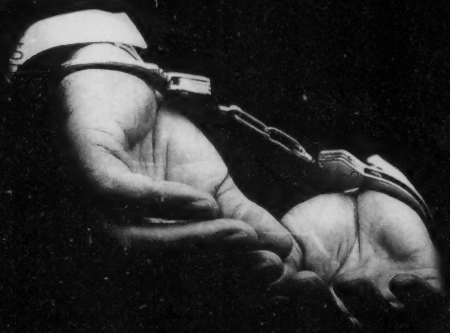

Criminal NEGLIGENCE

Nearly seven years after 9/11, information-sharing problems that hobble law enforcement are just beginning to be solved.

BY ROBERT L. MITCHELL

U.S. BORDER PATROL agents intercept a man trying to enter the U.S. illegally from Mexico. Unaware that he is wanted by the FBI for three murders, they return him to Mexico. The man returns to the U.S. and murders several more people before being caught.

A team of investigators works for 20 years to bring down an international drug-trafficking organization. Had they known about related information in other law enforcement databases scattered across the U.S., the case might have been closed in three.

True stories like these have highlighted the critical need to improve information sharing among law enforcement organizations, but it wasn't until the 9/11 attacks, the subsequent 9/11 Commission Report and a presidential mandate that better information sharing became a top priority.

The initiatives that arose from that mandate are finally beginning to open up stovepiped data repositories by transforming how law enforcement agencies at the federal, state and local levels capture, store and share data.

The biggest changes have come in two areas: how law enforcement identifies bad guys, and how investigators gain access to incident reports documented by more than 20 federal agencies and 20,000 state, county, local and tribal law enforcement organizations nationwide. "You'll be able to search data that you never had access to before," says Tom Bush, assistant director in the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) division.

Most of the improvements in data sharing flow from the development of the Global Justice XML Data Model, a standard that provides a common vocabulary and structure for the exchange of data among law enforcement databases. Initiated by the U.S. Department of Justice, GJXDM was released in 2003. "By 2004, there were projects all across the country using it," says Paul Wormeli, executive director of the Integrated Justice Information System Institute, a public-private partnership that helped develop the standard.

Failure to Communicate

75% Percentage of police agencies that use automated systems to manage incident report data.

25% Percentage of those systems that are capable of sharing that information.

In 2005, CIOs at the DOJ and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security agreed to build the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), an extension of GJXDM that facilitates data sharing beyond law enforcement to the areas of justice, public safety, intelligence, homeland security, and emergency and disaster management. Work is also beginning on direct computer-to-computer data exchanges using Web services. "This field is waking up to service-oriented architectures," says Wormeli, noting that some reference architectures are already in place.

These standards are designed to solve the problem of proprietary and incompatible law enforcement record management systems without requiring every organization to throw out what they have and start over. "The beauty of NIEM is that it preserves the legacy systems. We're building middleware," says Wormeli.

Most of the identity databases at the federal level aren't yet NIEM-compliant, but agencies are planning upgrades to those systems and have already taken steps to facilitate data sharing. Although federal agencies use many databases for law enforcement, the three primary identity databases are the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint ID System (IAFIS); the DHS's IDENT fingerprint database of 90 million foreign nationals, gathered from visa applications and used at all points of entry; and the U.S. Department of Defense's Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS), currently used to monitor foreign nationals entering and leaving U.S. military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

IDENT, IAFIS and ABIS are all capable of some data exchanges by way of GJXDM today, but each is being reworked to natively support the NIEM standard and allow data exchanges with databases in fields outside of law enforcement, such as emergency management. IDENT is in the process of being updated, and contracts to develop the next generations of IAFIS and ABIS, which will add facial and iris image-recognition capabilities, were awarded in February.

BROKEN RECORDS

The second half of law enforcement's silo problem is the inability to access incident reports.

Agencies share information on criminals and arrest records with the FBI, but the incident reports, which detail the crimes, remain isolated in thousands of federal, state, county and local record management systems. Those records, consisting of structured and unstructured data, are the lifeblood of investigations, says Maj. Chris Brown of the Oregon State Police.

Although 75% of police agencies use automated systems to store those records, less than 25% of those systems are capable of sharing that information, says Dan Hawkins, director of public safety programs at Search, a national consortium of state agencies that promotes information sharing.

Regional data-sharing networks have sprung up around several metro areas, but there is currently no way for investigators to access all of the disparate record management systems across the country. That ability to "connect the dots" is important not only for FBI trending and analysis, but also for wide-

ANASTASIA VASILAKIS

Law Enforcement Databases

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Automated Biometric Identification System
Contains 2.4 million identity records on foreign nationals. ABIS gathers fingerprint (10-print), facial and iris biometric data but currently uses only fingerprints for identification.
NGA
Next Generation ABIS
The ABIS update will add palm prints and allow identification using all four biometric identity measurements.
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National Crime Information Center database
20 million records containing information on crime-related "things and people," including violent gangs, terrorist organizations, stolen property, and missing and wanted persons.
N-DEx
Law Enforcement National Data Exchange
Will collect and correlate criminal incident reports, most of which are locked in thousands of disconnected federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agency record management systems.
Department of Homeland Security
United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) program
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SOURCES: FBI, DOD AND DHS-VISIT

KEY TO LAW ENFORCEMENT DATABASE STANDARDS

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So last March, the DOJ and the FBI's CJIS division began rolling out the National Data Exchange initiative (N-DEx), a NIEM-compliant database and data-sharing network. N-DEx was designed to gather and exchange incident and case reports, as well as arrest, incarceration and parole records, and other data with all NIEM-compatible systems in local, state, tribal and federal agencies.

Both the FBI and the DOJ wanted to have federated search capability across incident reports residing in state and local record management systems nationwide while allowing those records to be updated and maintained by their local owners. "The locals maintain possession, but we have visibility into their sharable information, and they have similar visibility into ours," said Vance Hitch, Justice Department CIO, in an e-mail exchange with *Computerworld*.

"Within the system, we'll do correlation of data, pull out entities [incident data] and provide the ability to search the data," says program manager Kevin

Reid. Investigators can use the system to make connections among incidents that might help to identify and track down suspects, says Brown.

In the first phase of the $85 million project, N-DEx will incorporate about 100 million records, including records from federal agencies. Initially, records will come from case management systems at the FBI and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, followed later by those of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the Bureau of Prisons, says Reid.

The regional data-sharing networks are also being connected. Initial deployments include networks in Delaware, Oregon, Nebraska, Texas, Ohio, San Diego and Los Angeles.

In this phase, 50,000 law enforcement users will have access to the N-DEx system. The next step will be to support Web services access and expand the user base to 100,000, says Reid. Ultimately, the system will have about 200,000 users and contain 250 million records. CJIS plans to add tools to enable investigators to work together on cases that cross borders. Investigators will be able to use N-DEx to create virtual regional information-sharing systems and form joint task forces on the fly, says Reid.

Brown was an early adopter of N-DEx and is a true believer in the system. If N-DEx had been at full capacity when he was working his drug investigation, he says, "we would have been able to do this in two to three years instead of 20."

Linda Rosenberg, director of the Pennsylvania Office of Criminal Justice Improvement, credits CJIS with doing "a tremendous job" with N-DEx. The state has 1,200 municipal police departments and no central department of public safety, so tying those disparate systems together has sometimes looked like an insurmountable challenge. "Now you don't have to go back and build these data warehouses and totally redo your entire infrastructure," Rosenberg says.

CHICKEN AND EGG

For the system to work, the information needs to flow in both directions. "That's the challenge," says David Gavin, assistant chief of the administration division at the Texas Department of Public Safety, which runs a regional data-sharing network known as T-DEx. "How do you get all of the record management systems in the country to export in that format so that they can participate and not just access [N-DEx]?"

Regional law enforcement networks will want to tie in, but connecting multiple record-management systems will be challenging. To facilitate that, the Office of Justice Programs' Community Oriented Policing Services program at the DOJ last year awarded $159 million in technology grants, with one caveat: Any record management system project is required to be NIEM-compliant.

Moreover, several vendors of record management systems have been mapping law enforcement agency data to the NIEM-standard format free of charge in hopes of getting future upgrade contracts, says Reid.

The DOJ's objective is to have all 20,000 agencies online within three years, but Reid is more optimistic. "By 2009, I think we'll have the majority of the country participating," he says.

That may be enough time to get the major regional information-sharing systems linked up, but Hawkins thinks it will take much longer for the rest of law enforcement community to follow along.

And Brown isn't so sure that things will proceed smoothly. Most record management systems in use by law enforcement are so highly customized that they often can't even share information with other localities using the same software, he says. Integration is expensive.

The federal government set aside $85 million to complete the N-DEx back-end systems and allocated nearly twice as much in grants last year to help state and local agencies update and connect their record management systems. But state and local officials say the federal government needs to spend much more to get everyone's data connected — a critical step to making N-DEx truly useful.

"I don't believe that there is the federal funding to make it happen," says Hawkins, noting that the $159 million in grant funding last year went to just 37 out of more than 20,000 agencies nationwide. Barring a major increase in federal funding, Hawkins says that it could be 10 years before the majority of agencies are online with N-DEx.

Rosenberg is also doubtful. Despite the $159 million, "the pot of money [from the DOJ] that's used by state and locals for information sharing has been cut by two-thirds," she says. Rosenberg says she worries that without more federal dollars, smaller agencies will simply forgo uploading their own data.

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Defiant Data

Several years ago, a person approached a guard at a nuclear plant and asked a series of suspicious questions, such as where he had obtained his uniform. The guard reported that the person asked the questions but could not identify him. "How do you put that into a database to see if someone asked similar questions at another nuclear plant?" asks Paul Wormeli, executive director of the Integrated Justice Information System Institute.

Better integration of law enforcement databases can help identify and track incident activity for known criminals, but identifying terrorists is more challenging. Many identity matches are made on the basis of fingerprints, and law enforcement doesn't necessarily have fingerprints for known or suspected terrorists unless they've been arrested in the U.S. or have been picked up by the IDENT or ABIS systems.

Not only is matching such persons with law enforcement identity databases difficult; figuring out how to identify and track possible terrorists raises privacy issues as well. Agencies must follow privacy policies that determine what can be done with identity data, how long it can be kept on file and when identity information is relevant to an investigation.

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5 EASY WAYS TO COMMIT CAREER SUICIDE

ISTOCKPHOTO

Technology can facilitate blunders, but the old-fashioned methods still work, too.

BY CALVIN SUN

BANG!

Without warning, the rifle discharged, tearing a hole through the floorboard of the car of an Army colonel. The rifle belonged to a young lieutenant who had been invited to go hunting with the colonel.

Though no one was hurt, the incident left everyone in the car shaken. Worse, the lieutenant had shot his own career in the foot, according to executive coach Bruce Sillers, who was a member of the lieutenant's battalion at the time of the incident.

You may never have recklessly discharged a firearm, but if you want to blast a hole in your career, there are plenty of weapons available, from a hair-trigger response to an e-mail to a faux pas at a company party. Here are five big no-nos to watch out for.

1 SENDING INAPPROPRIATE E-MAIL

Ever read an e-mail too quickly and fire off an angry reply, only to discover later that you had misinterpreted the original sender's message? You end up not only wasting everyone's time, but also poisoning your work relationships — perhaps permanently.

Before you reply to an e-mail that has elevated your blood pressure, ask yourself, "Would I feel comfortable explaining my response on a witness stand?" or "Would I want my response to be published on the front page of *The New York Times*?"

If the answer is no, take time to cool off. Store the message in a drafts folder and review it later. Are you sure this is what you want to say, especially if you're directly insulting the recipient? Could your words be interpreted more negatively than you intend? And finally, would you want this message to find its way to your boss — or to the HR director?

By the way, don't count on the "Unsend" feature to bail you out. It will fail when you need it most. And be very careful not to hit Reply All — or your supposedly personal conversation could be the talk of the office.

2 PUTTING DOWN CO-WORKERS

Having done a significant amount of work for a particular client, I decided one day to try to expand my presence there. I called an executive in another part of that organization, introduced myself and said that "Carl" (a fictitious name for the IT executive with whom I had been working) was pleased with my work.

That executive responded, "Why should I care what Carl thinks?"

Not smart — especially when said to someone outside the organization. If Carl had heard about this remark — and these things do get around — it could have created a Grand Canyon-size rift between him and his indiscreet co-worker. More critically, remarks like this

damage the credibility of the organization.

Here's another example: Suppose you're the person to whom help desk staffers escalate problems when they are unable to resolve them. You find out, while talking to a customer, that the staffer she spoke with gave her some really poor information. At this point, you may think the staffer is an idiot, but it's not a good idea to say so.

For one thing, if your boss gets word that you're badmouthing your co-workers to the customers, you could be in big trouble. Maintaining a united company front when dealing with the customer is a much better idea. Resolve any issues with your IT colleagues privately.

3 CONTRADICTING THE BOSS IN PUBLIC

Suppose that your boss makes a factual error while giving a presentation. Should you jump in and correct the error immediately, secure in the knowledge that your boss will thank you for underlining the mistake in front of an entire room of people?

Um . . . no.

Correcting your boss in public will hardly endear you to him. More likely, he will be upset at being made to look foolish, and he may even wonder why you didn't catch the error yourself prior to the presentation.

When can you safely contradict the boss in public? I can think of only two instances.

First, if the building is on fire and your boss is pointing people to the wrong exit.

Second, if the boss makes a mistake about making a mistake. In other words, if he identifies the correct vendor for your off-site backup, then mistakenly says, "Sorry, that was wrong," you absolutely may say, "No boss, you were right to begin with."

Otherwise, exercise extreme discretion when your boss misspeaks in public. If the matter is truly important (for example, the CIO gives the wrong go-live date for your SAP project), approach him during a break and quietly mention the mistake.

A smart and gracious CIO, upon resumption of the session, will identify the error, apologize and credit you with the correction.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

AVOIDING BLOOPERS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. HERE ARE SOME SKILLS AND CHARACTERISTICS THAT YOUR BOSS WILL VALUE.

THE FIVE MOST VALUABLE SKILLS IN CURRENT IT EMPLOYEES:

1. Working well with customers
2. Communication
3. Project management
4. Strategic thinking
5. Application development

THE FIVE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER CHARACTERISTICS IN AN UP-AND-COMING IT LEADER:

1. Knowledge of the business
2. Communication skills
3. Technical knowledge
4. A record of innovation
5. A career history in the industry

SOURCE: *COMPUTERWORLD* INTERNET POLL OF 139 IT LEADERS, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2007

4 COMMITTING SOCIAL BLUNDERS AT A COMPANY EVENT

Staff misbehavior at office parties has been a cliché at least since the 1950s, but that doesn't mean people still don't make fools of themselves. Don Michalak, co-author of *Making the Training Process Work* (Writers Club Press, 2001) and a consultant for companies such as Ford Motor Co., KPMG International and Marsh & McLennan Co., stresses that such functions are not purely social events. "Don't do anything you wouldn't do at the office or at a client's office," he says.

Don't park at the shrimp cocktail table or pig out at the buffet. And if alcohol is being served, be careful. You know what can happen when a person drinks too much.

If you bring a guest, warn him to watch what he says. You don't want your guest to introduce himself to the boss and say, for example, "Oh, you're not as bald as I'd heard you were!"

5 BURNING BRIDGES WHEN YOU RESIGN

Many of us fantasize about telling off the boss when we quit a job. But before you let loose, think twice. Remember the '90s Internet bubble? Many IT people left traditional companies with visions of pulling in millions from start-ups, only to be rudely surprised when their new companies went under. Those who left on good terms with their former employers had a better chance of being rehired.

Christian Bass is a firm believer in maintaining good relationships with previous employers. Until 2006, Bass served as director of academic technologies at George Washington University. After leaving GWU, he eventually formed his own company, Successant LLC. He recently negotiated a consulting contract with — you guessed it — his old boss at GWU.

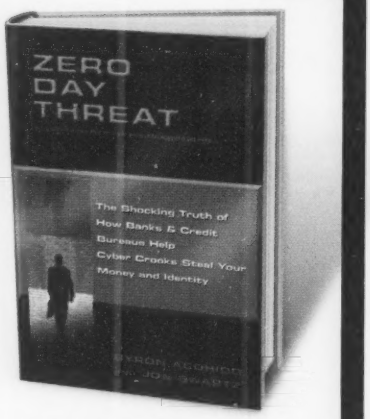
Discussing his GWU resignation, Bass stresses the importance of leaving with a good reputation and a record of solid accomplishments. He says he emphasized that he was leaving for positive rather than negative reasons. "If something was bothering me at work," he says, "I resolved it rather than letting it be the factor that led me to leave."

So when you leave, be gracious. Stress the advantages of the new job, not the shortcomings of the current one. Find reasons to be grateful to have worked at the latter, but be sincere and don't make things up. If you learned something from your boss or co-workers, let them know.

Even if you had difficulties with someone, you still could say, "Thanks for teaching me how to benchmark an Active Directory environment." Leaving on good terms can only help you if you encounter these folks later.

Keep your career alive and well by using common sense to avoid these deadly slip-ups. ■

Sun *is a business consultant, speaker and writer. You can read his blog at* www.calvinsun.com.



Zero Day Threat

How **Microsoft missed the boat** on cybercrime

ON JAN. 15, 2002, Microsoft Corp. *Chairman Bill Gates issued a jaw-dropping memo with the subject line "Trustworthy Computing." To stem rising hacker attacks, Gates ordered all Windows development halted and directed his company's full attention to shoring up security.*

Microsoft has since poured vast resources into making Windows PCs more secure. And yet the risk of having your PC compromised and your sensitive data used in scams has never been greater, according to a new book, Zero Day Threat: The Shocking Truth of How Banks and Credit Bureaus Help Cyber Crooks Steal Your Money and Identity *(Sterling Publishing, 2008), by* USA Today *technology reporters* **Byron Acohido** *and* **Jon Swartz**. *The authors point to a confluence of factors increasing the danger: a banking system built for speed; a tech industry enamored with commercializing the Internet; consumers hooked on convenience. In these edited excerpts, Acohido and Swartz convey Gates' acknowledgment of the problem.*

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

Bill Gates seemed weary and disengaged. He had just co-delivered a keynote address to about 3,000 tech-security executives, analysts and researchers at San Francisco's Moscone Center and was sitting in a vast room behind the stage waiting to do a requisite one-on-one interview with one of the authors.

The Feb. 6, 2007, speech was billed as Gates's final command performance at the giant RSA Conference, the tech-security industry's premier convention, held early each year. At his first RSA keynote, delivered in 2004, Gates had a good story to tell. It had been two years since he had issued his Trustworthy Computing edict, ordering his troops to alter their features-first worldview and make security their new religion. Microsoft developers at the time were in the home stretch of hammering together Windows XP Service Pack 2, which would make the use of personal firewalls and automatic patching standard practice for most home computer users.

Now here he was, five years into Trustworthy Computing, with Windows Vista, the first Microsoft desktop operating system with security accounted for in every major component, freshly delivered to store shelves.

EVANGELIZING SECURITY

Microsoft now had a more well-rounded security story to tell. And tell the story it did. Beginning in

Continued on page 30

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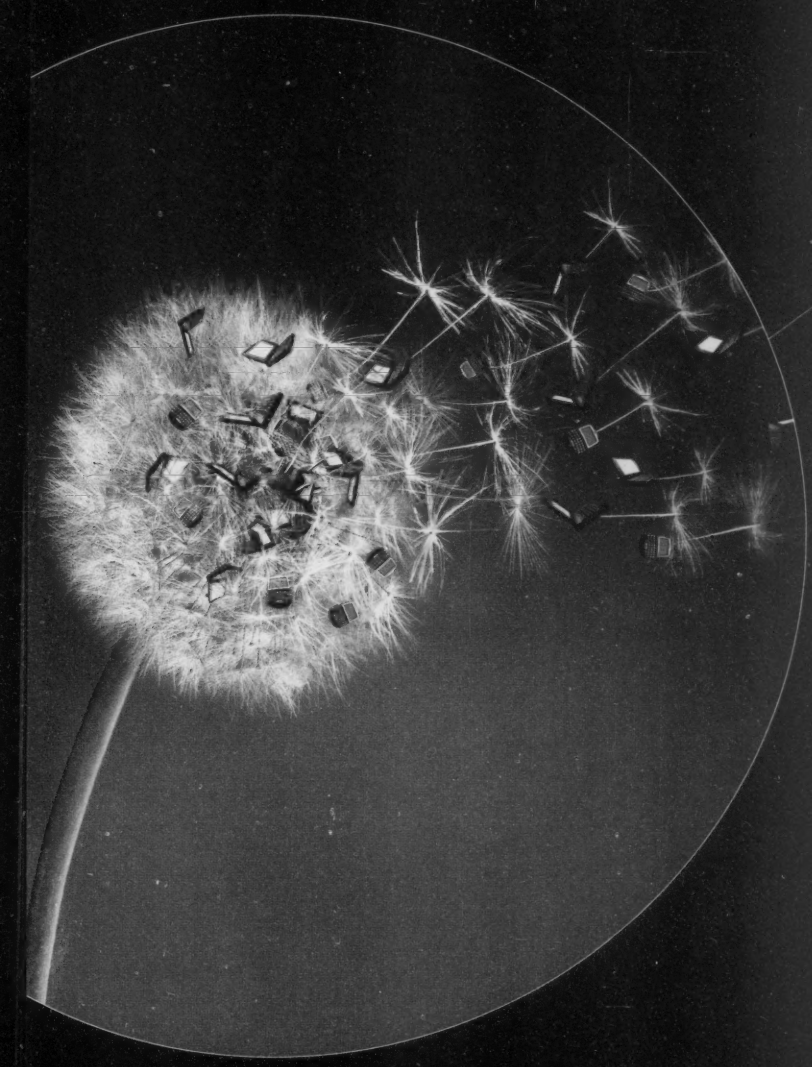

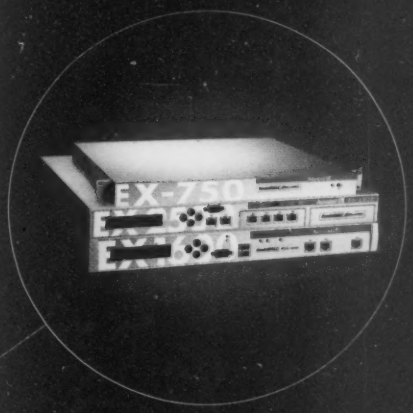

SO MUCH FOR THE STATUS QUO.

Existing enterprise-class remote access and SSL VPN solutions fall short—especially when it comes to granular endpoint control, the types of devices they can accommodate, or the ease of administering security policies. Even worse, these solutions can be susceptible to vulnerable connections—actually serving as conduits for malicious code or non-compliance. The SonicWALL® Aventail E-Class SSL VPN solution establishes, manages, and enforces granular application access policies for external and internal users using all types of endpoints including laptops, smartphones, or other devices. The E-Class SSL VPN EX-2500, EX-1600 and EX-750 provide comprehensive interrogation and remediation, establishing trust before access is granted. The E-Class SSL VPN solution is compatible across a broad range of platforms and OS types. When a SonicWALL Network Security Appliance is used with an E-Class SSL VPN, the combined functionality uses deep packet inspection along with granular access controls to decontaminate traffic and to allow authorized application access from any remote device. This combined solution blocks malicious code or any type of unauthorized access. Learn more about SonicWALL's E-Class SSL VPN solutions at **www.sonicwall.com/dandelion** or call **1.888.557.6642**.

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Continued from page 28

the summer of 2006, a crack team of Vista "evangelists" — the product managers and marketing specialists assigned to wine and dine researchers, analysts and reporters at conferences and other events — began spreading the SDL gospel. SDL stood for Security Development Lifecycle, a process for meticulously rooting out coding errors and security holes throughout the development of a new software product.

Given the timing of his swan-song appearance at RSA, Gates had the perfect pulpit to drive home the message his SDL disciples had delivered to many of the people seated in Moscone Center's main hall. But Gates' focus appeared to be elsewhere. Several months earlier, he had announced his intent to retire in mid-2008 to turn his attention to eradicating disease in Third World nations.

Before he could reinvent himself as a full-time philanthropist, he was obligated to sign off on Trustworthy Computing as a success — at least on his watch — and formally turn over the security reins to Craig Mundie, Microsoft's chief research and strategy officer.

For his final RSA keynote, Gates chose to share the stage with Mundie, crediting him as "the one who motivated me to send that memo around."

Sitting on a couch backstage after the keynote, Gates looked haggard. The reporter gave him another chance to hype Vista: "Bill, the rate of threat mutation has never been higher, and cyberintruders are more organized than ever, using ever-more stealthy, targeted attacks. That said, how far can Microsoft's SDL products go toward stemming the wider security problem?"

BAND-AID SOLUTION

Gates looked up, glared angrily at the reporter and said he didn't understand the question. After a few more awkward exchanges, Gates took a swig from the can of Diet Coke his handlers invariably kept within his reach. The jolt of caffeine appeared to fire his synapses and perk him up.

During the 45-minute interview that ensued, Gates pointed out breakthrough security features in Vista. Warming to the interview, Gates opined that "computer security is 100 times better today than in 2002. But there has been an evolution in spam and phishing, and you can't apply Band-Aids to the problem."

SDL, Microsoft's blueprint for developing more-secure software, was a lot more than a Band-Aid, of course. SDL forced Microsoft's designers and developers to address the reality that any software program touching the Internet can be attacked through the Internet. Still, SDL was no panacea.

John Pescatore, longtime tech-security analyst at Gartner, singled out a major shortcoming: Microsoft designed SDL to strengthen old-style software programs sold in shrink-wrapped boxes, programs that typically spent years in the development lab. It did very little to improve security of Web 2.0 software typically developed on the fly and deployed quickly as a service over the Internet.

EXTREME CAUTION

By the close of 2006 and the start of 2007, a select group of cybercriminals had begun sending out e-mail messages to workers at certain government agencies and large corporations. The e-mails contained corrupted Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook files as attachments. These were zero-day attacks. No patches were on Microsoft's radar.

The e-mail messages were carefully crafted to look like they came from a co-worker or an acquaintance. Once the recipient clicked on the corrupted Office file, a back door loaded onto the machine. The intruder now had access to install a rootkit cloaking mechanism, along with tools to monitor traffic for clues on the best ways to drill deeper and stealthily infect other PCs inside the organization's intranet. The ultimate goal: harvest sensitive data.

Compared to trying to put the cybercrime genie back into the bottle, stamping out major diseases in Third World nations might seem a snap.

Five years into Trustworthy Computing, with Office zero-day attacks on the rise, Microsoft was compelled to issue Security Advisory 933052 notifying its customers that even documents appearing to arrive from trusted contacts may not be entirely trustworthy:

"As a best practice, users should always exercise extreme caution when opening unsolicited attachments from both known and unknown sources."

SUPERIOR WEAPONRY

With attacks multiplying, Russian cybercrime lords enriching themselves, and Chinese cyberspies roaming wild, Gates unburdened himself of a heavy load at RSA 2007. Compared to trying to put the cybercrime genie back into the bottle, stamping out major diseases in Third World nations might seem a snap.

The fight to keep cyberthieves and cyberspies from rendering Microsoft's products untrustworthy now fell to Craig Mundie. Internet security, Mundie observed, was based on a fortress mentality. Defense systems protecting key parts of the Internet were akin to moated castles from which valuable assets could evaporate into the air or seep out through tunnels under the walls. And to make matters worse, these castles had come under siege by an enemy with superior weaponry.

"It's sort of like we've been in the medieval age of computer networking and access. And we say, you know, we just have to build more and more fortress-like protections," says Mundie. "So we build thicker walls, higher turrets, put moats out in front, bigger drawbridges. And what we didn't really see coming yet is essentially the airplane and the air-to-surface missile." ■

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Congratulations to Our Finalists!

COMPUTERWORLD MOBILE & WIRELESS WORLD

Best Practices IN MOBILE & WIRELESS

AWARDS PROGRAM

The "Best Practices in Mobile & Wireless" award recipients will be honored Tuesday, June 10th at the 6th annual Mobile & Wireless World conference in Miami, Florida.

This program honors IT user "best practice" case studies selected from a field of qualified finalists.

Finalists in each of the following categories are:

Business Evolution through Mobilizing Field Workers

- **BP**, Warrenville, Illinois
- **Northrop Grumman Corporation**, McLean, Virginia
- **Puckett EMS**, Austell, Georgia
- **Visiting Nurse Service of New York**, New York, New York
- **Wound Technology Network, Inc.**, Hollywood, Florida

Deploying Wireless Mobility in the Enterprise

- **Detroit Medical Center**, Detroit, Michigan
- **Dolphin Stadium**, Miami Gardens, Florida
- **Land Rover**, West Midlands, Great Britain
- **PODS Enterprises, Inc.**, Clearwater, Florida
- **Roto-Rooter**, Cincinnati, Ohio

Innovation and Promise

- **City of Anaheim, CA**, Anaheim, California
- **Infrastructure Management Institute at Northern Kentucky University**, Highland Heights, Kentucky
- **Northrop Grumman Corporation**, McLean, Virginia
- **Oklahoma City IT Services Dept.**, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- **RTI International**, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina

We'd like to thank our "Best Practices in Mobile & Wireless" Judges for 2008:

- Timothy Cox, OnStar
- Mark Dulle, Dorfman Pacific
- David Dully, Baptist Health
- Thomas Gagne, Continental Airlines, Inc.
- Sheng Guo, New York State Unified Court System
- Matthew Hamblen, Computerworld
- Randall Headrick, Air National Guard
- Julia King, Computerworld
- George Pollack, Wound Technology Network, Inc.
- Bill Trussell, TheInfoPro
- John Wade, Saint Luke's Health System
- Patrick Wiest, Landstar

Judging Criteria

Judges evaluate and rank the finalists in each category according to their substantiated mobile and wireless solution attributes and achievements against a set of criteria such as:

- Strategic importance to the business.
- Positive impact on other business/organization units.
- Substantive customer impact (service, retention, acquisition).
- Provides a strategic advantage to the business/organization while anticipating and accommodating the deployment of future mobile and wireless initiatives.
- Financial return and measurable payback (returns on investment, assets, resources) through created/protected revenue opportunities or cost savings.
- Addresses challenges of data, information and application security, etc.

Getting an F and Turning It Into Fun

An **audit** shows a need for more effective **security-awareness training.** But how can it be both **cheap and entertaining?**

IT'S NEVER fun to get an F, but fun is what I decided we needed to inject into our training when that was the grade we got in one aspect of our recent security assessment.

The F came about through a social engineering exercise. The consultant who was hired to do the agency's audit was given an office in our headquarters and a desk phone that was programmed to display "IT consultant" on Caller ID. Then I gave him a list of phone numbers for all the agency employees throughout the state.

Making calls at random, the consultant introduced himself, mentioning the name of his company. He then explained that he was working for me and looking at the security controls around our information systems. He just needed the employee to tell him her username and password, he explained, so he could get on with his investigations.

In nearly every case, dropping my name was all it took for him to get the employees to reveal all. Those susceptible to this ploy included a manager who considers himself to be particularly IT-savvy. (That was the one call that wasn't random, since I suggested that the consultant give him a try.) The manager said he was too busy to help out, so he instead offered the names and phone numbers of his direct reports. In effect, he gave the consultant more ammunition, since he now could drop this manager's name as well when calling his direct reports.

The IT staff had been alerted to this exercise so that they could mop up by changing passwords every time an account was compromised. However, they hadn't expected to spend so much time changing so many passwords. The consultant's success rate was amazing.

But no one was as surprised as me. We do security awareness training annually, and every new employee gets security training. Obviously, we are not getting through.

■ It was amazing how many employees were willing to reveal passwords.

Since the assessment results were going to go up the chain of command, I needed to be prepared with mitigation plans. Part of the problem, I knew, was that our security awareness program is static and uninteresting. I firmly believe that training needs to be fun and interesting to be effective, but as with so many other things, a lack of resources was an impediment. I had bought a series of security awareness films that I wanted to deploy over the agency intranet, but IT hadn't been able to accommodate my request.

A MOVIE DATE

Now, with that F staring me in the face, I was motivated to find alternatives. Suddenly, a low-tech option became more appealing. Those films were gathering dust on the shelf. Why not roll them out, not on the intranet as I'd originally envisioned, but through in-office screenings around the state? To make it fun, I would provide popcorn and soda.

Trouble Ticket

AT ISSUE: Employees gave up usernames and passwords to a stranger with careless ease.

ACTION PLAN: Make security awareness training more memorable by making it more fun.

But how could I reach all the agency offices spread out over the state? Videoconferencing, that's how.

The videoconferenced screening is certainly going to take more of my time than the intranet option would have. I have to schedule the event, market it with flair, buy the snacks and be on hand for a Q&A afterward. But this approach may be more effective than the intranet option, because we will be assured of more participation — and it will be more fun.

Now I'm thinking that this approach might work for other agencies in our department too. We regularly videoconference with them, so it would be easy to get the films into their offices. And when I purchased the films, I made sure that we had a network-based license that could accommodate the entire department.

Again, we're talking about cutting into more of my time. But at least this project is shaping up as something that could be a lot of fun. And the more fun it is, the greater the payback. ■

This week's journal is written by a real security manager, ***"C.J. Kelly,"*** *whose name and employer have been disguised for obvious reasons. Contact her at mscjkelly@yahoo.com.*

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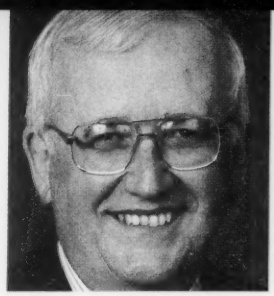
■ OPINION

Paul M. Ingevaldson

The Traveling CIO



AS CIOs begin to log significant international miles, I thought I would help you answer that ever-present question, "How many countries have you been to?"

This is not an easy question to answer because it's complicated by many shades of meaning. How do you define "country"? Do territories count? What about Hong Kong? Is an emirate a country? Is the U.K. a single country?

And then, how do you define "been to"?

When I was running our international division, we decided to establish some rules on how to count countries. Since I was in charge, I decided to make this the only dictatorial portion of my job. I would listen to any appeal, but my decision was final.

Often, I was accused of making decisions based on my own experiences, but that is totally bogus.

The first question that has to be considered is the definition of a country. The U.N. lists 192 members, but it doesn't include Vatican City, Kosovo and Taiwan. The U.S. State Department counts 194 countries, with Taiwan the lone exception. In addition, there are many territories that are not officially considered countries, such as Guam and Bermuda.

For our nonpolitical purposes, we will count 195 nations and all noncontiguous territories as countries. In addition, there are several special situations that I have addressed.

So, here are my rules. Of course, I'm retired now, so with someone else in charge, they probably have changed.

1. You must leave the airport* in order to count the country. One exception to this is if you stay in the airport hotel overnight. In that case, you may count the country. A quick trip in a taxi just to count a country violates the spirit of the process and will not count.

***The hijacking corollary:**

■ You can't count a country if you travel across it by airplane, balloon or dirigible.

If you are the unfortunate victim of a hijacking, you get the hijacking bonus: Any airport that you stop at counts as a country visited.

2. You can't count a country if it was not a country when you visited it. So pre-2008 Kosovo, for example, doesn't count.

3. You can count a country if it was a country when you visited, even though it is no longer a country, e.g., Hong Kong, the USSR.

4. You can count a country if you take a train or car through it, even if you never leave the vehicle, e.g., an auto trip through Monaco.

5. You can't count a country if you travel across it by airplane, balloon, dirigible or other airborne conveyance.

6. If you take a ride from the airport into the city center, you may count the country, even if you don't stay overnight.

7. You must be ex-utero (outside the womb) to count the country. And if you were, you may count it even though you have no memory of the visit.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS:

8. Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England are considered countries, as are the Palestinian territories and Gibraltar.

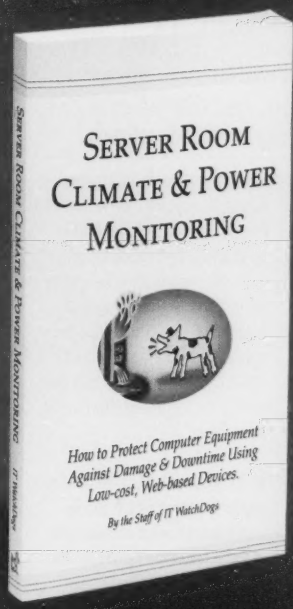
9. The United Arab Emirates is a single country with six emirates. Antarctica is considered a country even though it is a continent.

10. Islands around the world have special relationships with various countries. Some are obviously part of a country, such as Bali and Hawaii. Others are considered separate countries, e.g., Greenland, Puerto Rico and French Polynesia.

I'm sure there will be some disagreement. I'll listen, but be ready to have your argument rejected. This is a tough job, but somebody has to do it. So when you have an idle minute or perhaps a six-hour flight, count your countries. Once you reach the 50 mark, you are officially a traveling CIO.

By the way, I visited my 75th country last year when we went to New Zealand in December. What a beautiful place! ■

Paul M. Ingevaldson *retired as CIO at Ace Hardware Corp. in 2004 after 40 years in the IT business. Contact him at ingepi@aol.com.*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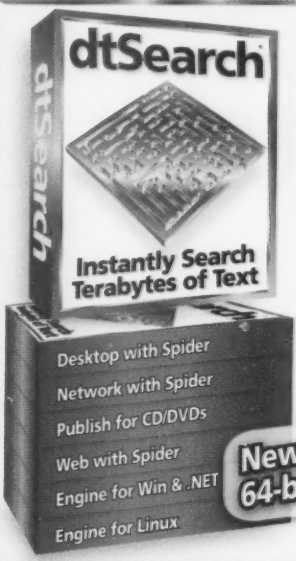

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Career Watch

BETTER Late THAN Never?

IF ONLY I COULD GET MY GUN BACK, I'D GET IN MY ROWBOAT AND FIND THE GUY WHO STOLE MY DAFFODILS.

Some of the more unusual excuses that managers said they had heard from employees over the past year in CareerBuilder.com's annual "Late to Work" survey:

1. While rowing across the river to work, I got lost in the fog.
2. Someone stole all my daffodils.
3. I had to go audition for *American Idol*.
4. My ex-husband stole my car, so I couldn't drive to work.
5. My route to work was shut down by a presidential motorcade.
6. I wasn't thinking and accidentally went to my old job.
7. I was indicted for securities fraud this morning.
8. The line was too long at Starbucks.
9. I was trying to get my gun back from the police.
10. I didn't have money for gas because all the pawn shops were closed.

21% Workers who owned up to inventing excuses for tardiness.

27% Bosses who said they are skeptical of their workers' excuses.

15% Workers who said they are late to work at least once a week.

SOURCE: ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED FEB. 11 TO MARCH 13, WITH 2,757 EMPLOYERS AND 6,987 WORKERS RESPONDING.

PAGE COMPILED BY JAMIE ECKLE.

■ ASK A PREMIER 100 IT LEADER

Ram Murthy

The **director of application systems** at the Peace Corps answers questions about **education, certifications, leadership** and **dealing with slackers.**

Would an A+ certification in networking, along with a master's degree, be useful in moving one's career along? And is an online master's degree worth much? The IT field is continuously evolving to meet business needs. This implies that the IT knowledge worker must always be on top of technology and invest in continual learning.

Getting A+ certification in networking with a master's degree in a related IT field does somewhat help, but it must be backed up with professional on-the-job skills and experience. With respect to online master's degrees, one from an accredited university does carry weight. In fact, in this network-centric world, online and self-paced educational opportunities to help you balance your professional and personal activities are becoming more common.

Remember, though, that while certifications and education can help you get an entry-level job, you will need to support your credentials with work experience if you want to move up.

I'm a 12-year IT industry professional whose position was recently outsourced. I'm thinking about returning to school to obtain mobile application development training at a cost of about $6,000. Do you think it's worth the investment? Yes. And if finding funds for the training is an issue, check out the self-paced and free classes and code camps that vendors like Microsoft and IBM offer.

With end users these days expecting to have information available anytime, anywhere and by any means, skills in mobile technology and mobile application development will be widely sought. I would also suggest that your résumé should show support for your training and education with real-life app dev examples to get the attention of recruiters.

In 12 years in IT, I've always been frustrated by those colleagues who manage to do the least possible work. They're like Wally in the "Dilbert" comic strips, and management doesn't seem to catch on. I've never wanted to rat these people out, but as workloads increase because of smaller staffs, the frustration is mounting. (Why are the Wallys always the last to be laid off?) What would you advise? The basic problem involves visibility and awareness. Your managers are completely blind on resource allocation and performance management. There should be better accountability. They need to institute weekly status reports and related communication tools on the work accomplished that will show who is responsible, accountable and producing the work.

As for you and the other non-Wallys, don't be modest about marketing yourself and your accomplishments. You might also need to employ creative communications to your customers and business units so the message circles back to your boss on who actually produces the work.

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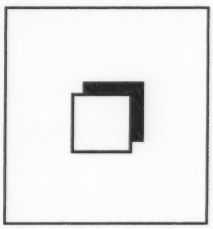
QUESTION?
If you have a question for one of our Premier 100 IT Leaders, send it to **askaleader@computerworld.com**, and watch for this column each month.

Database Administrator - Maintain & administer Oracle d/bases & Oracle applics. Reqmts incl Master's or equiv in Comp Sci, Comp Applics or Info Systems; & working knowl of Oracle & SAP Basis Admin. & Informatica Power Center. Resume to: Dharmendra Sethi, GAVS Technologies, 10901 W 120th Ave, Ste 110, Broomfield, CO 80021.

Software Engineers (Topeka/KS): Design/ develop web-based retirement benefit mgmt IT system. Req BS in CSi, CIS or Math, or suitable combination of edu, training or exp, plus 2-yr exp in OO, Java or .Net, IBM FileNet, ILOG, AJAX, SOA. Send resume/salary reqt to Norman, Sagitec Solutions, LLC, 2233 N.Hamline, Suite 420, Roseville, MN 55113.



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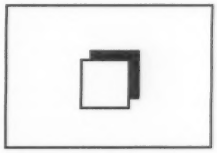

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SharkTank

TRUE TALES OF IT LIFE AS TOLD TO SHARKY

How It's Done

This pilot fish brags that he's worked on a software project that finished on time, on budget and with only "I thought you wanted . . ." problems when it was shown to the customer – and no problems when it was delivered. "Not possible, you say?" asks fish. "Well, I do grant it was a special case: The app was for the regional president. There was a standing procedure for change requests that was actually enforced this time. The next-to-last step in the procedure for a change request was that the requesting suit had to go to the sponsoring suit and explain the change and why it was important enough to delay delivery of the sponsor's app. For some reason, almost all of the "gotta have now" changes got to that point and suddenly became "next release." We just sailed along with the original design and the few changes requested by the president."

No, Not Quite

New router has just been configured for a secure tunnel to let a branch office connect to HQ's VoIP. There's only one thing left to do: Pilot fish calls a user at the branch and asks her to restart the router on her end. He describes the router to her, and she seems to know what to do. But when fish tries pinging through the tunnel a few minutes later, he gets nothing – no ping, no activity, dead in the water. So he calls the user again. Fish: Hey, did you restart the router? User: "Yes, but I had to use a paper clip." Fish: What? User: "I had to use a paper clip to reset the router." Fish: You're kidding, right? User: "No, why?" Fish: Are you telling me that you took a paper clip and inserted it in a little hole? User: "Yup. The little hole said Reset, and that was what you told me to do." Fish: I told you to *restart* the router. User: "Isn't that the same?"

A Little Too Quick

This small business's homegrown accounting system takes forever to sort entries before printing invoices, so a grad student pilot fish is hired to work on improving it. His solution: Rewrite the sort routine using the Quicksort algorithm in machine code, which fish has recently seen in a journal article. "I demonstrated my work to the accountant, showing her that the task that used to take six hours now finished in less than 20 seconds," says fish, who's justly proud of his effort. "She called in the big boss and started bragging about money well spent. That's when I made my big mistake: I told them I had adapted code from a journal. The big boss looked at me and said, 'That's what we're paying you for, to type in stuff from a magazine?' I had learned the hard way the first rule in software development: Don't tell everything you know."

■ *Sharky's first rule: Tell me everything about your true tale of IT life at sharky@computerworld.com. You'll score a sharp Shark shirt if I use it.*

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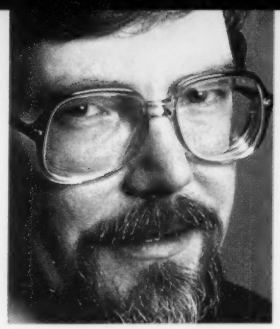
■ FRANKLY SPEAKING

Frank Hayes

'Office' Politics



OK, TRY TO FOLLOW THIS: Microsoft has spent the past two years slamming its Open XML file format through the process to make it an international standard. Along the way, there's been arm-twisting, committee-packing, bribery and other chicanery. But by last week, Microsoft was one step away from success.

And that's when Microsoft adopted a competing standard.

Sound crazy? Sure — until you learn that Microsoft's own products don't actually conform to the standard that Microsoft has been twisting arms to pass. And that the competing standard, the OpenDocument format (ODF), will actually be easier to add to Microsoft Office than Open XML would be.

So if Microsoft wants to sell an office suite with a file format that meets formal international standards anytime soon, it has to go with ODF.

That's why the company announced last week that the next service pack for Office 2007 will include the ability to save Office documents in ODF but that complying with the Open XML standard will have to wait until the next full version of Microsoft Office.

Think you're all the way down this rabbit hole? Think again: Why is Microsoft so interested in conforming to international standards with its office suite, anyway? Doesn't Microsoft already pretty much own that market?

Sure. And that's why developers of competing office suites — in particular, the open-source OpenOffice — started lobbying years ago to get large users such as governments to require archival storage formats that aren't under the control of a single vendor.

They had a point. Microsoft is notorious for changing its file formats with every new release of Office and only partially documenting the formats. That threatens to turn archival documents created with Office into just so many incomprehensible bits.

■ Turns out the OpenDocument file format will actually be easier to add to Microsoft Office than Open XML would be.

The competitors spent five years getting their OpenDocument format for XML-based documents approved as a formal standard, first by the OASIS consortium and then by the international standards group ISO. They hoped that would give them a leg up against Microsoft, which was committed to its own XML document format, Open XML.

FOR MORE ON 'OFFICE' POLITICS, SEE THE NEWS STORY ON PAGE 6.

But Microsoft found a tame standards group, Ecma, to fast-track Open XML to become a standard. Despite complaints that the fast-track process is supposed to be only for well-understood, widely implemented formats — and there was only one vendor offering Open XML, Microsoft — by late April, Microsoft had narrowly won the final round of votes, and its format was a draft ISO standard.

That was when ISO revealed that Microsoft Office 2007 doesn't actually meet the spec for the standard Microsoft worked so hard to pass.

Which means there are *zero* vendors currently offering Open XML.

After a hard look at how long it would take to meet the ISO specifications for each of the formats, Microsoft decided ODF would be easier to do. That's why it will come first.

And here's the funhouse-mirror result of this long, strange trip:

Microsoft wins its standards battle, but adopts the XML file format it has fought against for years.

Microsoft's competitors succeed in getting Microsoft to adopt their file format — but lose their longed-for leg up against Microsoft Office.

And users get the standard XML file format they need — just nothing like the way they expected to get it.

Follow all that? Good. Now will someone please remind me again that standards are all about predictability? ■

Frank Hayes *is* Computerworld's *senior news columnist. Contact him at frank_hayes@computerworld.com.*

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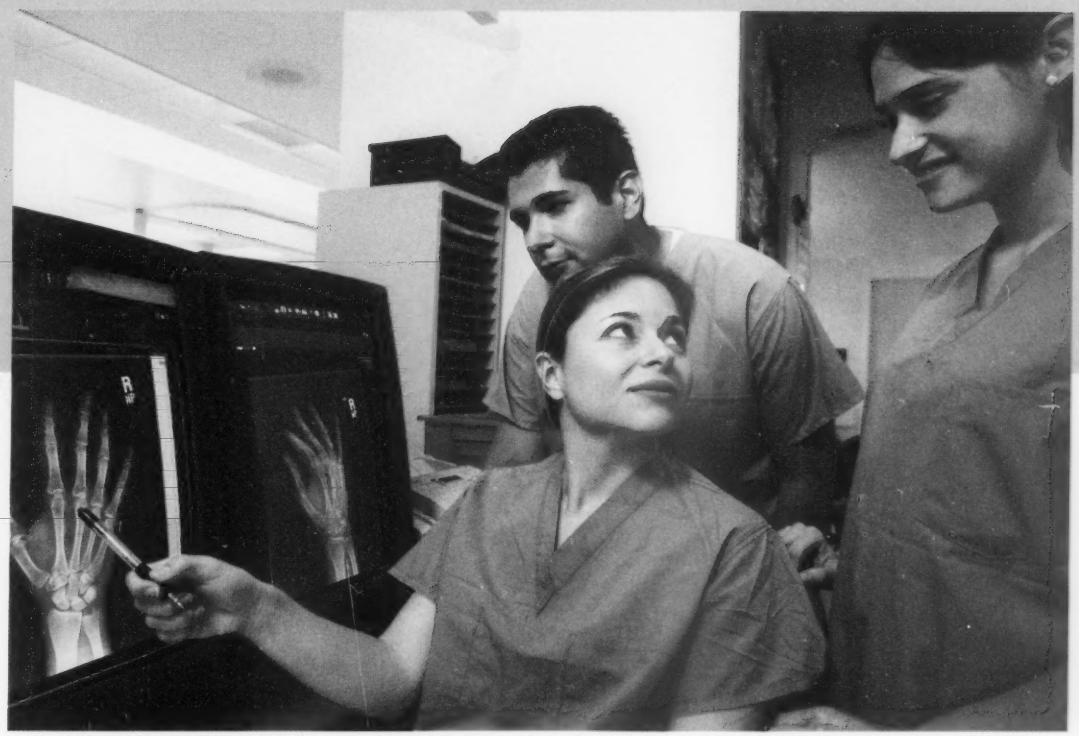

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